

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

HON. NICK J. RAHALL

VETERANS PREFERENCE BILL

Mr. Speaker. Today I am introducing legislation which I believe preserves one important aspect of veterans' preference. Title V section 3310, provides that competition for the positions of guard, messenger, elevator operator and custodian, in the civil service, will be restricted to veterans' preference eligibles, as long as preference eligibles are available. However, in recent years, the opportunity for veterans to obtain secure employment in these four restricted positions has been decreasing. A major reason for this is the conversion of many of these positions to contract performance.

We must not forget this Government's long-standing commitment to our Nation's veterans -- a commitment which recognizes the tremendous contribution these men and women have made to our country. We can not turn our backs on veterans who served this country -- to ensure the security of our ideals -- by ignoring special protections which were instituted to show our commitment and appreciation.

The bill I am introducing provides that Federal agencies may not separate a veterans' preference eligible from the position of guard, messenger, elevator operator, and custodian, because of a contract award. The bill also gives priority to preference eligibles when vacancies occur or new positions are available. Finally, due to a technical interpretation by certain Government agencies which dictates that guards and uniformed officers be given separate classifications, this bill will make it clear that guards and uniformed officers are equivalent. I am confident that this bill favorably addresses legitimate concerns with regard to the impact of a blanket prohibition on contracting out these positions, while still upholding the original intent of the Veterans' Preference Act.

I am honored to be joined in introducing this legislation by my distinguished colleagues Marcy Kaptur, Steny Hoyer, Austin Murphy, J. Roy Rowland, Richard Shelby, MORE TO BE ENTERED BEFORE INTRODUCTION OF THE BILL, Members who have consistently demonstrated their commitment to veterans. I am hopeful that all of our colleagues will support this opportunity to say "We have not forgotten."