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House of Representatives

A BILL TO EXTEND VETERANS' EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

HON. NICK JOE RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 31, 1985

● Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation which would amend title 38, section 1662 of the United States Code, to extend the time limitation for completing a program of education to veterans of the Vietnam era as determined in chapter 34.

Veterans eligible for educational benefits under title 38, chapter 34 are those veterans who served more than 180 days of active duty between January 31, 1955, and January 1, 1977, and who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

The educational benefits provided to these veterans in section 1662 extend up to 10 years after discharge. To many veterans who served in active duty during the Vietnam era, 10 years is a relatively short period of time in the process of becoming readjusted to civilian life. At the end of 10 years,

many veterans have just begun to take advantage of the educational opportunities that their benefits provide. It is my belief that an additional 5 years is needed in most cases to complete educational programs.

For this reason my bill strikes out "10 year(s)" and inserts "15 year(s)" in section 1662 of title 38. In order to give this 5-year extension of benefits to all Vietnam-era veterans, my bill also extends to December 31, 1989, education benefits for all veterans covered by chapter 34 whose educational benefits expire prior to the passage of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, these veterans served our country during an era when it was not popular to do so. The conditions in Vietnam were in many instances incomprehensible to the point of being barbaric. These veterans deserve every benefit that their service to this country provides for them. I invite my colleagues to join me in reaffirming our commitment to America's veterans. This is an opportunity for us to say once again that, "we have not forgotten."●