

G. V. Sonny Montgomery Weekly Radio Show

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Audio begins at 00:19

Interviewer: This is Congressman Sonny Montgomery's weekly radio report from Washington. Congressman included in the Defense Authorization Bill to be considered in this House this week are two provisions to improve education benefits through the GI Bill. What will these provisions do?

Montgomery: We're very glad these provisions have been provided. Over 500,000 young Americans will be discharged from the military between now and 1995. We're saying in that legislation if you have not signed up for the educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill, that when you are discharged, and you do not have these educational benefits you can buy into the GI Bill Educational Provisions. You have to put up some money, but you get a lot of money back over the next three years to get an education so that's a big step forward. That will help these young men and women who didn't sign up for the Montgomery GI Bill when they are discharged, and they're pushed out of the service now they will be eligible for the educational benefits. The other provision will help the National Guard and Reserve. It says that if you're in the National Guard and Reserve and signed up for 6 years, that that you can go toward a masters or PhD degree, can get graduate degrees under the Montgomery GI Bill. Right now, Reserves cannot get the graduate degrees to be funded by the government. We're correcting that. From now on you can get graduate degrees if you join the National Guard and Reserve and want to get a masters or PhD degree. The government will pay for it.

Interviewer: Mississippi veterans will benefit from the construction of a 10.3-million-dollar veterans service complex to be built in Jackson. Your Veterans Affairs Committee took action last week to move that project along. What are details?

Montgomery: Well, we hope that the next step will be the Secretary of the Veterans Affairs will go head and authorize and spend the money to to build this regional headquarter center right near the grounds of the veteran's hospital there in Jackson. I would like to thank the University of Mississippi, Dr. Turner and others for letting us get this land from from the University Medical Center. That joins the hospital there and this is where the regional building will be built. It will house all the veterans' regional offices in the Jackson area and they're bout 3 or 4 of 'em around the Jackson area we'll put em all under one roof. In other words, a veteran can come in from any part of Mississippi and go to that building which will be on the grounds of the veteran's hospital and they can get a one time service there and I'd also like the thank the Mississippi Legislature and also Senator Rob Smith who handled this bill who gave us permission to transfer that land. So, what it means is that Mississippi more and more is becoming a a center for all the Southern states of handling of veterans matters including benefits and medical care. This building will house all of these regional offices and we're very proud that the Jackson area is now becoming a center for veterans' programs and all of the Southern states.

Interviewer: The Veterans Affairs Committee also approved a test program that would allow Medicare to reimburse the Department of Veterans Affairs for treating certain veterans. Supporters say the plan could improve access and services at our veterans' hospitals. Would you agree?

Montgomery: It certainly will. Right now, our retired veterans who retire out of the out of the active military or out of the National Guard and Reserve make too much income on their retirement and they're not using our veterans' hospitals. Reason why they're not using 'em is cause they can't get in. Under this legislation that we passed out of the committee, an individual that has Medicare can go to the veteran's hospital and get, he or she will get a priority. Medicare will pay into the VA hospital for that for that treatment so that does 2 or 3 things. It brings in more money to the VA local hospital there so we can open up more wards, we'll have a shortage of money, buy better equipment and we can treat more veterans. It's got a lot of merit to it to further use our veterans' hospitals by getting military retired the opportunity come into the VA hospital. Right now, under Medicare these veterans are going other places and not coming to the VA hospital. This will ease up the law where these retirees of the military can come into our veterans' hospitals and get treatment.

Interviewer: Thank you Congressman. This has been Congressman Sonny Montgomery's weekly radio report from Washington furnished as a public service by this station.

Audio ends at 05:16