



TESTIMONY OF

DIANE M. ZUMATTO  
AMVETS NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

BEFORE THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS, SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

SERVING  
WITH  
PRIDE



*U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS  
SECOND SESSION*

---

**AMVETS**

NATIONAL  
HEADQUARTERS  
4647 Forbes Boulevard  
Lanham, Maryland  
207064380  
TELEPHONE: 301459-9600  
FAX: 301459-7924  
&-MAIL: [amvets@amvets.org](mailto:amvets@amvets.org)

CONCERNING

A LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON:  
HR 2018, HR 2088, HR 2119, HR 2529, HR 3671, HR 3876,  
HR 4095, HR 4102, HR 4141 & HR 4191

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<u>BILL#</u>	<u>TITLE/TOPIC</u>	<u>AMVETS POSITION</u>
HR 2018	Honor Those Who Served Act of 2013	Support
HR 2088	Claims adjudication centers of excellence	Support
HR 2119	Veterans Access to Speedy Review Act	Support
HR 2529	Veteran Spouses Equal Treatment Act	Support
HR 3671	Expand the eligibility for veteran medallions	Support
HR 3876	Burial with Dignity for Heroes Act of 2014	Support
HR 4095	Veterans' Compensation COLA Act of 2014	Support
HR 4102	Deceased veteran benefits	Support
HR 4141	Enhanced-use leases for NCA	Support
HR 4191	Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act	Support

Chairman Runyan, Ranking Member Titus and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to offer our insight into the legislation being considered today, specifically: HR 2018; HR 2088; HR 2119; HR 2529; HR 3671; HR 3876; HR 4095; HR 4102; HR 4141; & HR 4191.

- HR 2018: Honor Those Who Served Act of 2013 – AMVETS supports this bill which will make it easier to provide headstones for veterans who currently don't have a headstone, or for those whose headstones have deteriorated when there is no Next of Kin available by broadening the definition of those eligible to request a headstone or marker from the VA.

From a preservation or historical point of view, this is a positive step forward in helping to identify and recognize veterans who lack any living relatives or whose relatives are unreachable. The placement of headstones on previously unmarked or illegible veteran graves helps to honor and preserve the individual stories of the braves American heroes from our past.

- HR 2088: A bill to direct the VA to carry out a pilot program to establish claims adjudication centers of excellence- AMVETS supports the concept of this legislation but would suggest 15, rather than 12, adjudication centers of excellence. We believe there should be one center for each of the VA's 15 body systems, which are:
  1. Musculoskeletal;
  2. Organs of Special Sense;
  3. Impairment of Auditory Acuity;
  4. Infectious Diseases, Immune Disorders & Nutritional Deficiencies;
  5. Respiratory;
  6. Cardiovascular;
  7. Digestive;
  8. Genitourinary;
  9. Gynecological Conditions & Disorders of the Breast
  10. Hemic & Lymphatic;
  11. Skin;
  12. Endocrine;
  13. Neurological Conditions & Convulsive Disorders;
  14. Mental Disorders; and
  15. Dental & Oral Conditions

With the institution of this model, gone will be the days of VA raters needing to be 'jacks-of-all-trades and masters of none'. Instead, body system 'experts' will evaluate all claims based on their individual area of expertise.

Thanks to the capabilities of the VBMS system (each claim issue is associated with a unique number), claims could be electronically divided up into individual parts or issues, forwarded to the appropriate center of excellence, each issue would then be rated by an expert, after all issues have been rated, the claim can be reassembled and the veteran notified of the outcome. This should go a long way to speeding up the entire claims process.

- HR 2119: Veterans Access to Speedy Review Act- AMVETS supports this legislation which seeks to speed up the veteran appeal process by providing options for the location/type of hearing, including video conferencing, conducted by the Board of Veterans' Appeals.
- HR 2529: Veteran Spouses Equal Treatment Act – AMVETS supports this legislation because of passage of the Defense of Marriage Act and because it would bring VA policy in line with DoD's on same sex marriage. In June of 2013, Sec. Defense Hagel said, "The Department of Defense intends to make the same benefits available to all military spouses -- regardless of sexual orientation -- as soon as possible. That is now the law, and it is the right thing to do."
- HR 3671: A bill to expand the eligibility for a medallion or other device furnished by the VA to signify veteran status- AMVETS fully supports this legislation which authorizes the VA to provide a medallion or other device to signify the veteran status of a deceased individual regardless of when the decedent passed away. This memorial device should be available for display on any and all veteran's headstones if desired.
- HR 3876: Burial with Dignity for Heroes Act of 2014 – AMVETS wholeheartedly supports this legislation which will provide grants to eligible entities to provide for the cost of burials for homeless veterans with no next-of-kin who are eligible to be buried in national cemeteries. Anyone who has honorably served their country in the Armed Forces should be buried with all appropriate honors and respect regardless of their housing status.
- HR 4095: Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2014 - AMVETS supports this legislation which would increase, as of 1 December 2014, the rates of veterans' disability compensation, additional compensation for eligible dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. This country owes an enormous debt of

gratitude to those who have served and sacrificed and it is right and just to adequately provide for their on-going needs.

- HR 4102: A bill to clarify that the estate of a deceased veteran may receive certain accrued benefits upon the death of the veteran – AMVETS supports this legislation.
- HR 4141: A bill to authorize the VA to enter into enhanced-use leases for excess property of the National Cemetery Administration that is unsuitable for burial purposes- AMVETS fully supports this legislation which seeks to extract monetary or in-kind value from unusable, excess property located within the boundaries of the National Cemetery System. Careful and creative stewardship of federal resources which encourage public/private ventures and enhance the ambience of our national cemeteries should be encouraged. Furthermore, land that would otherwise serve no purpose would not only bring in revenue while maximizing the overall usage of the land, but would also contribute to the mission of the NCA.
- HR 4191: Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act – AMVETS support this legislation which would improve the treatment of medical evidence provided by non-VA medical professionals in support of claims for disability compensation. Appropriate evidence, obtained by from a medical specialist or expert that is competent, credible and probative, on a physical or mental health condition should be admissible and accepted by the VA. This step should help move claims more quickly through the VA system.

This concludes my testimony and I look forward to answering your questions.

21March 2014

The Honorable Representative Jon Runyan, Chairman  
U.S. House of Representatives  
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance & Memorial Affairs  
335 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Runyan:

Neither AMVETS nor I have received any federal grants or contracts, during this year or in the last two years, from any agency or program relevant to the 12 March 2014, House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zumatto". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "Z".

Diane M. Zumatto  
AMVETS National Legislative Director

# Biographical Sketch

---

Diane M. Zumatto of Spotsylvania, VA joined AMVETS as their National Legislative Director in August 2011. Ms. Zumatto, a native New Yorker and the daughter of immigrant parents decided to follow in her family's footsteps by joining the military. Ms. Zumatto is a former Women's Army Corps (WAC) member who was stationed in Germany. Zumatto was married to a CW4 aviator in the Washington Army National Guard and is the mother of four adult children. Ms. Zumatto is extremely proud that two of her children have chosen to follow her footsteps into military service.

Ms. Zumatto has more than 20 years of experience working with a variety of non-profits in increasingly more challenging positions, including: the American Museum of Natural History; the National Federation of Independent Business; the Tacoma-Pierce County Board of Realtors; the Washington State Association of Fire Chiefs; Saint Martin's College; the James Monroe Museum; the Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States. Diane's non-profit experience is extremely well-rounded as she has variously served in both staff and volunteer positions including as a board member and consultant.

After receiving her B.A. in Historic Preservation from the University of Mary Washington in 2005, Diane decided to diversify her experience by spending some time in the 'for-profit' community. Realizing that her creativity, energy and passion were not being effectively challenged, she left the world of corporate America and returned to non-profit organization.

AMVETS National Headquarters  
4647 Forbes Boulevard  
Lanham, Maryland 20706-4380  
Business Phone: (301) 683-4016