

U.S. Rep. Fitzgerald: Statement on markup of Vaccine Discharge Parity Act

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WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Fitzgerald issued the following statement in response to the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs markup of H.R. 6671, which ensures members of the Armed Forces granted a general discharge for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine remain eligible for GI Bill education benefits.

“Yesterday, Democrats on the House Veterans Affairs Committee voted to report my bill, H.R. 6671, favorably out of Committee. However, this bill, as amended, is not the legislation I originally introduced, but rather a purposeful attempt by the other side to kill this legislation, which every House Democrat voted against previously, and deprive servicemembers of their hard-earned education benefits,” **said Congressman Fitzgerald.**

“These are men and women who have done their time, who have paid their dues, and who have served with distinction up until the point of refusing this vaccine. Some have decades of service, while others sought a religious or medical exemption that was denied. Democrats continue to play Washington insider games to avoid moving this legislation forward, and now, because they chose to add billions of dollars in unrelated provisions instead of listening to the needs of their constituents, thousands of our veterans, and their children, will lose their education benefits. This is flat-out wrong.”

Background

On August 24, 2021, the Secretary of Defense issued a directive requiring mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for all servicemembers, including those in the Ready Reserve and the National Guard. To prevent those who have refused the

vaccine from being dishonorably discharged, Congress included a provision in the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act limiting discharges for failure to receive the COVID-19 vaccine to either an honorable discharge, or a general discharge under honorable conditions. However, those servicemembers who receive a general discharge under honorable conditions are ineligible for both Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits.