

NOVEMBER 19, 1985

STATEMENT BY

REAR ADMIRAL HENRY H. BELL

U. S. COAST GUARD

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING

AND EMPLOYMENT

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

THE VETERANS' EDUCATIONAL

ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1984

MR. CHAIRMAN, I AM REAR ADMIRAL HENRY H. BELL, CHIEF OF THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL FOR THE COAST GUARD. IT IS A PLEASURE TO APPEAR BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE TO OFFER TESTIMONY ON THE EFFECT OF THE NEW GI BILL ON THE COAST GUARD.

THE COAST GUARD, AND OUR SISTER SERVICES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, HAVE UTILIZED THE NEW GI BILL ENTHUSIASTICALLY FOR RECRUITS OF THE HIGHEST CALIBER.

APPROXIMATELY 50 PERCENT OF ACTIVE DUTY PERSONNEL ENTERING THE COAST GUARD SINCE 1 JULY 1985 HAVE ELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NEW GI BILL. OF THAT NUMBER, APPROXIMATELY 75 PERCENT HAVE INDICATED THAT THE AVAILABILITY OF THE NEW GI BILL WAS A MAJOR FACTOR, BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE MAJOR FACTOR, THAT ENCOURAGED THEM TO JOIN THE COAST GUARD.

THE MAJOR DIFFICULTY WE FORESEE IN THIS PROGRAM IS THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO, DESPITE HAVING THEIR PAY REDUCED FOR TWELVE MONTHS, FAILED TO MEET ONE OF THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA. WE WILL BE WORKING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO ARRIVE AT A FAIR AND RESPONSIBLE REMEDY TO THIS SITUATION.

TRANSFERABILITY OF GI BILL BENEFITS TO FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY MEMBER EARNING SUCH BENEFITS MIGHT BE A POPULAR ADDITIONAL FEATURE TO THE PROGRAM. HOWEVER, IT WOULD NOT SERVE AS A TARGETED INCENTIVE TO RETAIN SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS THAT THE COAST GUARD NEEDS TO RETAIN. WE CONCUR WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S POSITION THAT IT IS PREMATURE TO DRAW UNEQUIVOCAL CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE NEED FOR TRANSFERABILITY AND RECOMMEND THAT TRANSFERABILITY NOT BE ENACTED BY CONGRESS AT THIS TIME.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THIS CONCLUDES MY PREPARED STATEMENT. I WOULD
BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.