

Washington, DC – Today the House Veterans Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a legislative hearing on H.R. 2985, [the Veteran's ID Card Act](#) . The bill, introduced by Congressman Akin last fall, would give veterans who have served honorably but are not currently eligible for ID cards a means to get an official VA ID card. The bill has almost 70 bipartisan cosponsors and has been endorsed by a number of veterans organizations, including the VFW, AMVETS, the Fleet Reserve Association, the Association of the United States Navy, and the Retired Enlisted Association.

[Text of the bill and current cosponsors](#) .

Congressman Akin's prepared testimony to the subcommittee in support of his bill is below:

***Representative W. Todd Akin***

***Second District of Missouri***

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***Testimony before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation***

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***June 20, 2012***

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Donnelly, thank you for the opportunity to testify before

you today regarding my bill, H.R. 2985, the Veteran's I.D. Card Act. As of today, this bill has over sixty-five bipartisan cosponsors and has been endorsed by a wide range of veterans' organizations.

Over the last several years, identity theft and the need to protect personal information have received heightened national attention. The aggregation of personal information and Social Security numbers (SSN) in large corporate databases and the display of SSNs in public records have provided opportunities for identity thieves.

- Thus, SSNs are a valuable commodity for persons seeking to assume another individual's identity or to commit financial crimes.
- Fraudulent and stolen SSNs can be used by noncitizens to work illegally in the United States.
- Although Congress and the states have passed a number of laws to address this issue, the continued reliance on SSNs by private- and public-sector entities underscores the need to identify additional protections.

Several federal agencies have begun removing SSNs from individual identification cards; including the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) which replaced VA medical identification cards with ones that no longer display the SSN, and as of June 2011, SSNs are no longer printed on any new the Department of Defense ID cards to protect the privacy and personal identity information of cardholders.

Currently only veterans who served at least 20 years or have a service connected disability are able to get an ID card signifying their service from the Veterans Administration. The only option available for all other veterans is to carry a paper form called a DD-214 that contains various forms of personal data protected by the Privacy Act of 1974, including their social security number, date & place of birth, selective service number, and service details. While this is appropriate information for the DD214, carrying this information is clearly an identity theft risk.

All veterans should be provided the opportunity to obtain an identification card proving their prior military service. The Veteran's ID Card Act will:

- Provide proof of military service for those who currently have no simple means to do so;
- Minimize the potential of identity theft through the potential loss or theft of a form DD-214;

- Provide employers looking to hire veterans a standard way to verify an employee's military service; and
- Provide military veterans the ability to take part in the goods, services or promotional opportunities that are offered to those who are able to provide proof of military service.

In order to ensure that this legislation has minimal impact on the Veterans Administration and can be done in a budget neutral way, this legislation:

- Requires a veteran who seeks to obtain this ID card to pay for the initial and any subsequent replacement cards;
- Requires the VA to determine the cost of such a card and apply a fee to the card appropriately to cover all costs;
- Uses the equipment already in place at VA facilities across the country to issue the card and collect payment;
- Requires the Secretary of the VA to review and assess costs every 5 years and change the fee structure appropriately to cover all ID costs under this bill.

The intent of the bill is to create a standard identification card to designate an individual as a former member of the Armed Services who was not medically retired or retired after 20 years. Currently, veterans who receive medical or retirement benefits have veterans ID cards, but veterans who served honorably for less than 20 years or didn't get injured do not have a similar proof of service. This bill aims to correct that. Additionally, as the President and Congress extend benefits to non-retired veterans, there should be a standard identification card for those individuals.

Veterans need a form of identification other than the antiquated form DD-214 issued by the military upon discharge. By providing veterans this option they will have at their disposal a more rugged and safer form of identification to prove their military service. This bill will have no cost to the U.S. government.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

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