

ROA applauds House passage of Elizabeth Dole Act

Six improvements to USERRA spearheaded by ROA included in significant legislative package passed with bi-partisan support by the U.S. House of Representatives.



WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES,
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EINPresswire.com/ -- The U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R.8371, the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, on Monday with overwhelming bipartisan support.



On behalf of ROA, I would like to thank the 389 members of the House of Representatives who voted in favor of the Dole Act. ROA will fight to ensure this bill is codified into public law."

ROA legislation and military policy director, Matthew Schwartzman

This legislation is the result of relentless engagement throughout the 118th Congress from many military and veterans service organizations, including the Reserve Organization of America.

"On behalf of ROA, I would like to [thank](#) the 389 members of the House of Representatives who voted in favor of the Dole Act," said ROA's legislation and military policy director Matthew Schwartzman, who attended the historic vote in the House gallery. "ROA will fight to ensure this bill is signed by the president and codified into public law."

Last year, ROA testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, advocating for enhanced protections under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Col. (ret.) Gilbert Patton, representing ROA, offered recommendations on improving the effectiveness of USERRA protections, modernizing enforcement regulations, and ensuring adequate resourcing for personnel handling USERRA claims.

Behind the scenes, ROA worked closely with congressional staff to turn its recommendations into legislative action. These efforts culminated in the introduction of H.R. 3943, the

Servicemember Employment Protection Act, sponsored by Rep. Scott Franklin (FL-18) and House Committee on Veterans Affairs Chairman Mike Bost (IL-12).

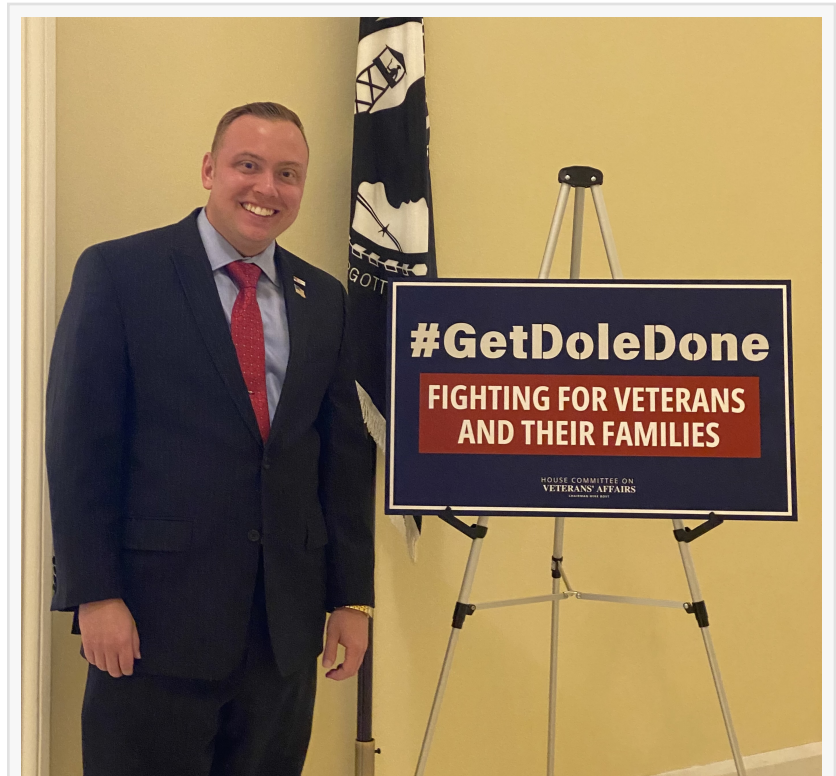
This bill sought to modernize and strengthen USERRA protections for Reserve and National Guard service members by:

- Expanding access to injunctive relief by prohibiting courts from denying a motion for injunctive relief based on the claim that an employee might receive "wages unearned" following unlawful termination.
- Increasing the potential for liquidated damages, allowing courts to award the greater of \$50,000 or the actual damages incurred by the plaintiff.
- Offering incentives for legitimate legal representation by awarding attorney fees for USERRA cases heard by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.
- Eliminating the immunity shield for certain intelligence agencies.
- Ensuring time spent away from work for military duty is credited based on the average of the employee's performance evaluations from the three years prior to their absence.
- Extending eligible time away from civilian employment to include medical appointments necessitated by a service-connected injury, wound, or illness.
- Requiring the Secretary of Labor to review and, if necessary, revise the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service's internal investigation manual on a biennial basis.
- Directing the Comptroller General of the U.S. to review and report on the U.S. Department of Labor's handling of USERRA relief actions, identifying trends and errors in case processing.

ROA had the opportunity to testify [again](#) before the Subcommittee to reaffirm its support for the bill and propose minor amendments to ensure its enforcement.

Of the nine changes proposed by the Servicemember Employment Protection Act and advocated by ROA, six were incorporated into the Dole Act, including:

- Expanding access to injunctive relief.
- Increasing liquidated damages awarded to plaintiffs.



ROA's legislative and military policy director Matthew Schwartzman on the Hill prior to the House's historic vote on the Elizabeth Dole Act. Nov. 18, 2024.

- Incentivizing legal representation for claimants with cases before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.
- Requiring the Secretary of Labor to review and revise the Department of Labor's investigation manual as necessary.

The Dole Act now heads to the Senate for consideration, where ROA is urging swift action to advance the bill.

“ROA urges the Senate to act quickly and pass the Dole Act, sending it to the President for signature,” said ROA's executive director, retired Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey E. Phillips. “Sections 221 and 222 of this bipartisan legislation are essential to modernizing USERRA and addressing the dual-career needs of Reserve and National Guard service members and their families.”

Before attending the vote, Schwartzman urged members of ROA's minute man movement to contact their elected officials and advocate for support for the Dole Act.

“I'm asking for your immediate engagement with this Call to Action as we fight to ensure this legislation passes Congress and is sent to the president's desk for codification,” Schwartzman wrote.

To help ROA ensure Congress delivers the Dole Act to the president for signature, visit ROA's Legislative Readiness Center by clicking [here](#).

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