

# The Daily Transcript

*Would help vets*

## Filner: Congress should pass no-bid contract requirement

By **CLAIRE TRAGESER**  
*The Daily Transcript*

**SAN DIEGO**

Congressman Bob Filner on Wednesday renewed his call for Congress to pass his legislation that would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to award no-bid contracts to veteran-owned small businesses.

The legislation would alter an existing piece of law relating to veterans' benefits that currently states the VA "may award" a no-bid contract to a small business owned by veterans.

Filner's bill would change the word "may" to "shall."

However, for a veteran-owned business to be chosen, the business must be a "responsible" source for fulfilling the contract, the contract award must be less than \$5 million and the contract award must come at a "fair and reasonable price that offers best value to the United States."

Filner introduced the bill, H.R. 240, in January, but it was referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, who referred it to the

Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

Dressed in an all-green ensemble with a camouflage necktie during the press conference Wednesday, Filner stressed the importance of the bill to veteran job creation.

Filner said the legislation would assist "people who have served our nation on the battlefield, and then served our own economy through their businesses."

"They have not only tried to grow their own businesses, but make sure any veteran who wants to own a business can grow that business as well," he said.

Filner said he joined with the non-profit Elite Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses to reignite emphasis on the bill because the country owes veterans assistance for the sacrifices they made.

"They've told me, 'We have been disabled while serving our nation, so surely we can get some breaks in getting us some business because we only want to work hard and do our job, but we need to get some contracts,'" he said.

Filner said veterans should be hired for local projects, including construction at Camp Pendleton, the downtown courthouse and port revival. He also said it should be mandatory that 3 percent of the VA's construction contracts go to veteran-owned companies.

Shelia Jackson and Kevin Beiser, San Diego Unified School District Board members, joined Filner at the conference to announce their board had voted to require 3 percent of its construction projects include veteran businesses.

"We have the responsibility to make sure when people complete their service they have the opportunities to provide for themselves and be productive members of the community," Beiser said.

Jackson, who served in the Navy for 21 years, said thinking about the lack of business opportunities going to veteran businesses "makes my blood pressure go up."

"We know what it's like to serve our country and come back and how difficult it is to find a job," she said. "So you go

out and start your own business only to find out the people whose life, liberty and freedom you protected will not allow you to bid on their own jobs. It's shameful."

Jackson's statement rung true for Tom Graham, a Vietnam War veteran who now owns the local information technology company **nGAP**.

Graham said while he was able to find work when he returned from the war, he has seen how difficult it can be for other veterans.

While large companies make efforts to hire veterans, he said it is better for veterans to start their own businesses so they can work in the areas they know best.

But, he said, veterans sometimes need a boost to get their businesses going.

"They should be at the top of the list," he said. "When you consider the sacrifices people who served make, especially in this type of environment with a volunteer military, this bill gives them a very small thank you."