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## *House of Representatives*

# BESTOWING HONOR ON OUR VETERANS!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Speaker, today there are over a million men and women serving in our country in the National Guard and Reserves performing a wide variety of duties from combat operations around the world to responding to natural disasters at home. Members in the National Guard serve two commanders—the President, if called upon to join active duty components of the armed services, and the Governor of their State. Because of this, they were some of the first on the scene to bring calm following Hurricane Katrina. And during the recent British Petroleum oil spill in the gulf, over 1,600 members of National Guard units from four States were mobilized to protect our treasured coastline.

At age 60, members of the Guard with 20 years of service qualify for benefits similar to military retirees but cannot be designated as veterans of the armed services. As such, these so-called gray-area retirees cannot call themselves veterans even for honorary purposes. As such, they are not saluted during veterans' tributes and don't enjoy other ceremonial veterans' honors.

This bill would allow the members of the Reserve component the honor of calling themselves veterans. Specifically, this bill would establish members of the National Guard who are eligible for a non-regular retirement, but who were never called to active duty during their careers, to be called veterans for honorary purposes.

The chief sponsor of this bill is Representative WALZ from Minnesota. He served 24 years in the National Guard, rising to the rank of Command Sergeant Major; and in fact is the highest ranking enlisted man ever elected to this Congress. When he was called to active duty for the period required to earn him full veteran status, he realized that many of his brothers and sisters at arms were denied that honor. This legislation is supported by members of the Military Coalition and the National Military Veterans Alliance, which together represent several million active duty service members, veterans, and their families. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3787.