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House of Representatives

PROVIDING HONORS TO OUR NATION'S HEROES!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to speak about H.R. 545, a bill that I have just reintroduced, "Providing Military Honors for our Nation's Heroes Act," to reimburse expenses of volunteers who provide military funeral honors at veterans' funerals.

Because thousands of service members are deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan while thousands of World War II and Korean War veterans die each day, there is simply not enough military to provide a proper seven-person honors detail for these funerals. Some families of veterans have had to "make do" with a CD playing "Taps." I am

saddened by this outrageous situation and determined to provide proper military funeral honors for all families who request them.

This bill will allow reimbursement to volunteers from members of veterans' service organizations (VSOs) and other organizations approved by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA). Transportation costs and other expenses, such as cleaning uniforms, incurred in providing funeral honors details will be reimbursed. A second change will allow reimbursement to details that are requested by funeral homes and the VA, as well as

the Department of Defense, the current practice.

Currently, members of VSOs and other volunteers can assist the military by providing a color guard, pallbearers, a bugler or firing party, but the law does not address ceremonies in which VSOs render honors without military representation. My bill will allow volunteers to be reimbursed even when no military person is a part of the honor guard. This change will increase the number of honors details available to families. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.