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Senate moves forward on COLA repeal

Floor vote protects measure to restore COLA benefits from filibuster

By a 94-0 vote, the U.S. Senate moved forward in passing legislation that would restore cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) benefits that were stripped from military retirees by a bill that Congress passed in December.

The vote taken on S. 1963, introduced by Sen. Mark Pryor, D-Ark., makes the measure eligible for a floor vote in the Senate and protects it against filibusters.

The U.S. Senate took advantage of an excellent opportunity to show its support for America's military retirees, American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger said.

Lawmakers showed strong solidarity in moving forward on the bill, which would repeal military pension cuts set to be imposed over the next decade after a congressional budget compromise was struck just before the Christmas holidays.

If enacted, S. 1963, would repeal Section 403 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. This section reduces COLA benefits for military retirees under age 62, at a rate of 1 percent annually over a decade.

Dellinger said he understood why the Senate overwhelmingly approved Pryor's bill. "It's a very succinct piece of legislation that can eliminate these unfair and ill-conceived COLA cuts. Both parties created this problem, and both parties demonstrated today that they are capable of decisive, bipartisan action when it comes to honoring its promises to America's veterans."

The measure gives the Senate a chance to act separately on the military COLA cuts, rather than deal with them as one of many issues included in a more comprehensive bill (S.1982) introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. "While The American Legion is greatly pleased by the Senate's actions today, we are going to hold Congress to its word on this matter," Dellinger said. "Anything less than a full repeal is a breach of faith with our military servicemembers, retirees and their families."