

VETERANS HOUSING PACKAGE PASSES SENATE

Sunday, 13 April 2008

Includes Akaka's legislation to boost veterans' home loans to Stimulus Act level

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee applauded Senate passage of H.R. 3221, with the Dodd-Shelby Housing provisions, and noted that the bill incorporated provisions from Akaka's bill to boost limit on veterans' home loans, as well as other important housing provisions for current and former servicemembers.

"We must quickly approve this bill, for veterans and other Americans struggling with the national housing crisis," said Akaka. "I commend Senators Dodd and Shelby for developing a housing bill that helps provide shelter for veterans and servicemembers."

The Economic Stimulus Act of 2008, passed by Congress and signed into law in February, raised loan limits for Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and FHA home loans, but did not include an increase for the VA Home Loan Program. To correct this oversight, Chairman Akaka introduced S. 2768, which proposed to provide the appropriate increase to the VA Home Loan limits; provisions derived from this bill were included in H.R. 3221. If enacted, the Dodd-Shelby Housing provisions would provide for this increase throughout the calendar year...

Additionally, the Senate agreed to an amendment that would authorize VA to provide increased adapted housing grants to disabled veterans. Previous increases to the adapted housing grant program have been infrequent and insufficient given the rising costs of housing and construction.

Other veteran-related provisions in the Dodd-Shelby Housing Bill include:

- An increase in the length of time a lender must wait before starting foreclosure involving a returning servicemember, from three to nine months
- One year of relief from increases in mortgage interest rates for returning servicemembers.
- The establishment of a counseling program carried out by DOD to assist servicemembers and veterans with financial issues
- Eligibility for VA-provided home improvement and structural alteration payments to totally disabled members of the Armed Forces before their discharge or release from the Armed Forces
- Extension of specially adapted housing benefits to certain veterans and servicemembers with severe burns

The bill now moves to the House of Representatives