

THE SENATE PASSES JOB BILLS IN ORDER TO HELP VETERANS



As Veterans Day passes, so does a bill to help unemployed veterans that are seeking jobs. The Senate unanimously passed this bill, as well as a bill to help federal contractors that are facing a new tax burden in 2013. The Senate voted 95-to-0 on Thursday to pass the first and so far only piece of President Obama's job packages to get out of the rut. The House is expected to take up the bill and pass it sometime next week. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the lawmakers are touting the bill as a bipartisan jobs creator that is fully paid for and would even reduce federal deficits by \$2 billion over the next decade. "The bills won't solve our jobs crisis," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Thursday. "But this attempt at bipartisanship has been used to help get them over the finish line and represents our best shot at making progress on jobs in the economy." This bill gives employers tax credits of up to \$5,600 for hiring veterans who have been unemployed longer than six months. It is also going to give employers a tax credit of up to \$9,600 for hiring long-unemployed disable veterans. According to the White House, the October unemployment rate for veterans who left the military after 2001 was 12.1 percent, leaving about 240,000 veterans out of work. The measure to help the veterans is just a small piece of President Obama's job package. "Let's work together to get this bill passed, because it's the least we can do for those whom we owe so much," says Sen. Jon Tester, who is a Montana Democrat and sponsor of the veterans' measure. The bill will also expand an education and jobs retraining program for unemployed veterans. It creates a new project that directs the Labor Department to figure out ways for veterans to use their specialized training to get licenses in different fields in the civilian work force. Republican Jim DeMint of South Carolina was the only lawmaker who actually voted against the amendment to add the veterans measure to the bill, saying that he didn't think the government programs for veterans would work. Yet, he voted in favor of the overall bill with the veteran tax credits on final passage. The Maine Republican Olympia Snowe all voted "present" on the bill. The Senate does plan to pay for the tax credits by keeping special fees that the Department of Veterans Affairs charges veterans for guaranteeing mortgages at current levels. These fees had to be scheduled to get much cheaper for veterans. In keeping the fees at current levels, the federal government can tap that revenue stream. Initially, Congress passed the withholding requirements back in 2006 to ensure that the government collected all taxes owed by contractors. The big business groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, have been fervently pushing to repeal the measure.

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