

Veteran Status: Change Federal Hiring Preference for Reserve Component Members

ROA urges Congress to confer veteran status for purposes of federal hiring veterans’ preference on Reserve Component members after 180 “cumulative” days on active duty versus “consecutive” days on active duty.

Reserve and Guard members meet operational requirements by performing duty on a frequent basis but often for short periods of time. Because DoD limits many mobilizations to 179 days or less, many reservists complete an entire career without serving the 180 consecutive days needed for veteran status per Title 5 U.S.C. 2108 -- even though they may have aggregated several years of active service.

This occurs, in part, because duty over 180-days triggers eligibility for a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move. The services want to avoid the associated cost with a PCS. This cost avoidance technique in turn prevents Guard and Reserve members from being put on the 180-day or more orders needed to achieve “veteran” status for purposes of veterans federal hiring preference -- an unintended second order effect.

The ROA proposal establishes equity between the Reserve and Active Components in fulfilling a 180-day requirement for veteran status. This proposal does it in a manner that reflects how the services use the Guard and Reserve for shorter periods of time to meet peacetime operations and surge requirements.

The chart below shows that the Guard and Reserve were used in increasingly more man-days per year in the early 2000’s. While usage has dropped in recent years, it will not go down to the previous peacetime levels of 1986-1989. Reductions to active duty end-strength have resulted in corresponding increases in the use of reserve forces.

Operational Usage of the Reserve Components

Fiscal Year	Man-Days Per Year
1986-1989	1 million
1996-2001	13 million
2002	41.3 million
2005	68.3 million
2012	25.8 million
2014	17.3 million

Reserve Component Personnel Issues: Questions and Answers, January 18, 2017, CRS Report RL30802

This “180-day consecutive” provision was added to Title 5 in 2006 and needs to be updated to reflect the current “cumulative” manner that DoD employs their reserve component.

Supported by ***Veterans Preference for Federal Hiring, ROA Resolution No. 16-29***