

**O&P Again Marches on Congressional Funding Stage: Senate VA Bill S. 1982 Would Establish New Federal Education Funding to Support Both New O&P Masters Programs and Support for Existing O&P Education Programs**

AOPA, through the work of its lobbyist Catriona Macdonald of Linchpin Associates, was successful in securing funding for \$10 million in new appropriated moneys for outcomes research in O&P (as part of the Congressional Budget package). We also continued our efforts to ensure new appropriated moneys to support O&P educational advances via S. 522 or the Wounded Warrior Workforce Enhancement Act.

There was some promising information about the inclusion of an additional \$10 million in possible federal funding for O&P educational programs. The Senate VA Committee released a large omnibus package of provisions related to Veterans' health and benefits, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014 (S.1982). Section 322 of S. 1982, see below, incorporates bipartisan legislation that would allocate \$10 million for modest, one-time grants to educational institutions to expand or create accredited masters or doctoral degree programs in prosthetics and orthotics.

The Committee is now looking at the bill for pieces that could be dropped to reduce the price tag and win the votes that are needed to pass the legislation. While our piece is tiny - \$10 million - and we have no particular reason to think that it will be a target, in cost-cutting exercises like this one, everything is at risk regardless of how small.

It is important to recognize that this bill failed to pass the Senate vote, by a narrow margin, because it was deemed to be too costly. But, that doesn't mean we have lost the \$10 million dollars!

The Senate VA Committee is now looking at the bill for pieces that could be edited or redacted to reduce the overall financial footprint; and win the votes that are needed to pass the legislation. While our piece is tiny - \$10 million - there is no particular reason or indication to believe that it will be a target, in these cost-cutting exercises.

# S.1982

## Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014

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### Subtitle B—Health Care Administration

#### SEC. 322. EXPANSION OF AVAILABILITY OF PROSTHETIC AND ORTHOTIC CARE FOR VETERANS.

(a) Establishment or Expansion of Advanced Degree Programs To Expand Availability of Provision of Care- The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall work with institutions of higher education to develop partnerships for the establishment or expansion of programs of advanced degrees in prosthetics and orthotics in order to improve and enhance the availability of high quality prosthetic and orthotic care for veterans.

(b) Report- Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth a plan for carrying out subsection (a). The Secretary shall develop the plan in consultation with veterans service organizations, institutions of higher education with accredited degree programs in prosthetics and orthotics, and representatives of the prosthetics and orthotics field.

(c) Funding-

(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS- There is hereby authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, \$10,000,000 to carry out this section.

(2) AVAILABILITY- The amount authorized to be appropriated by paragraph (1) shall remain available for expenditure until September 30, 2017.