



## **Summary: Support and Defend Our Military Personnel and Their Families Act**

On May 3, 2017, Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida) and Mike Thompson (D-California) introduced [H.R. 2346](#), the Support and Defend Our Military Personnel and Their Families Act. This bipartisan bill would address long-standing barriers to naturalization for immigrant members of the U.S. armed forces, veterans and their families.

More than [24,000 immigrants](#) were on active duty in the military as of 2012. About [94,000 immigrant veterans](#) of the U.S. armed forces have not naturalized.

### **What the Bill Does**

- Expedites the naturalization process for U.S. service members and certain veterans. The bill would allow members of the U.S. armed forces who serve or served honorably for any period of time (even one day) to be eligible to apply for naturalization, during both peacetime and periods of hostilities. It also would increase from six months to one year the time during which a service member separating honorably from the military may apply through the expedited naturalization process.
- Accelerates the process for family members of U.S. service members and veterans to gain green cards. The bill would allow the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS secretary) to adjust spouses, parents, children or minor siblings of U.S. service members and veterans who served honorably in the military to lawful permanent resident status if they are eligible to receive an immigrant visa, are admissible to the U.S. and pay an application fee. Spouses and children of U.S. service members and veterans would be exempt from the numerical limitations on immigrant visas in order to promote family unity.
- Allows family members of deceased U.S. service members to obtain legal status. The bill would allow spouses, parents, children or minor siblings of a soldier who died as a result of an injury or disease incurred or aggravated during military service to obtain lawful permanent resident status up to two years after the date of the death, or two years after the bill's enactment, whichever is later.
- Ensures U.S. service members and veterans are given extra consideration before deportation.
  - The DHS secretary would be required to approve any notice to appear (which initiates removal proceedings) issued to members of the U.S. armed forces and military veterans who served honorably.
  - The DHS secretary would be required to consider certain factors when determining whether to initiate removal proceedings against members of the U.S. armed forces and veterans, such as an individual's eligibility for naturalization, military service record, grounds for deportability and any hardship to the individual, the armed forces or his or her family that the deportation would cause.
  - Individuals who have served honorably in the U.S. armed forces would not be able to be deported under certain expedited removal proceedings.