



NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF VETERANS' ADVOCATES, INC. (NOVA)
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**“H.R. 675, H.R. 677, H.R. 732, H.R. 800, H.R. 1067, H.R. 1331, H.R. 1379,
H.R. 1414, H.R. 1569 and H.R. 1607”**

April 14, 2015

Executive Summary

The National Organization of Veterans' Advocates, Inc. (NOVA) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(6) educational membership organization incorporated in the District of Columbia in 1993. NOVA represents more than 500 attorneys and agents assisting tens of thousands of our nation's military Veterans, their widows, and their families to obtain benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

NOVA is pleased to offer testimony before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs on new bills affecting Veterans and their families, including:

H.R. 732 – Veterans Access to Speedy Review Act: NOVA supports the intent of this bill to encourage the use of video conferencing for the conduct of hearings before the Board of Veterans' Appeals. However, the bill's title could cause some veterans to mistakenly assume that electing to have a video conference hearing versus an in person hearing before the Board will “speed up” the Board's review.

H.R. 800 – Express Appeals Act: NOVA cannot support this bill for three reasons: (1) The bill would create two separate tracks for appeals; (2) To get an express appeal, the veteran must waive the right to submit additional evidence; (3) There is a very real possibility that this bill will mislead veterans to believe that if they give up their right to submit further evidence, then their appeal will be heard sooner.

However, NOVA does support the elimination of the need for a statement of the case and filing of a substantive appeal and the prohibition of remands for development. NOVA proposes this bill be converted from a pilot program to the implementation of structural changes to the VA's appeal process which apply to all veterans and claimants immediately. A streamlined adjudication process should not be conditioned upon a veteran's waiver of the right to submit evidence.

H.R. 1331 – Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act of 2015: NOVA supports the intent of this bill to place medical evidence provided by non-VA medical professionals in support of claims for disability compensation on an equal basis. NOVA suggests this bill be amended to codify the treating physician rule used by Social Security claimants, which will result in fewer denials and fewer appeals.

H.R.1607 – “Ruth Moore Act of 2015”: NOVA cannot emphasize enough how important this bill is to victims of sexual assaults which occurred while serving on active duty. If Congress does nothing else this year for veterans, it must pass this bill.