



**Representatives Terrence Upchurch
and Adam Miller
20th and 6th House District**

Chairman Loychik, Vice Chair Demetriou, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee - thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Resolution 95. This resolution urges Congress to pass HR 1255, which would allow direct descendants of African American World War II veterans to receive their GI bill benefits.

The servicemen's readjustment act, also known as the GI bill was signed into law by President Roosevelt to attract more people to fight in the war. With its passing many African American men enlisted and served this country in hopes that they would receive those benefits. However, as we all know, racism was still prevalent in the 1940s, and most African American veterans did not receive them.

These soldiers, who often had to fight on the front lines, would return home and be treated as less than human. There was no round of applause or standing ovation for the Black men who risked their lives. The opportunity to receive free college tuition, low cost home loans, and better paying jobs was all stripped from them.

Now imagine we all continue to come to work and do our job but the State just decides they are not going to pay us. (pause & look around) I don't think anybody in this room would be happy and we would all be figuring out, how we are going to get the money that we are owed. African American veterans and their descendants are owed, at the bare minimum, their GI bill benefits that they were promised! Nobody works for free and no one should ever go to war for free.

It is never too late to try and make things right, we need to give them what they are owed. Thank you to members of his committee and thank you to my friend and joint sponsor for this leadership and dedication on this issue. (go to Rep. Miller)

Committees:

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Thank you Chair Loychik, Vice Chair Demetriou, and my fellow members of the committee for allowing us to testify on this important Resolution – HR 95.

The Resolution calls on Congress to pass HR 1255 (Reps. Mouton, Clyburn), **the Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023**.

The GI Bill and the VA Home loan powered our economy and helped make Greatest Generation – the Greatest Generation when they returned home.

The **Service members Readjustment Act of 1944** was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 22, 1944, this act, also known as the G.I. Bill, provided World War II veterans with funds for college education, unemployment insurance, and housing.

It put higher education and home ownership within the reach of millions of veterans of WWII and later military conflicts.

In practice, this opportunity for prosperity was denied to Black World War II veterans and their descendants.

Black WWII Veterans were denied their benefits unjustly, and HR 1255 is the first step in getting this unacceptable issue resolved.

HR 1255 would:

- Extend access to the VA Loan Guaranty Program to the surviving spouse and certain direct descendants of Black World War II veterans who are alive at the time of the bill's enactment;
- Extend access to the Post-911 GI Bill educational assistance benefits to the surviving spouse and certain direct descendants of Black World War II veterans alive at the time of the bill's enactment;
- Require a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report outlining the number of individuals who received the educational and housing benefits;
- Establish a Blue-Ribbon Panel of independent experts to study inequities in the distribution of benefits and assistance administered to female and minority members of the Armed Forces and provide recommendations on additional assistance to repair those inequities.

Following World War II, Congress passed legislation for all who fought for our country so that their sacrifice would be rewarded with a range of benefits, including low-cost mortgages and low-interest loans to start a business or farm, unemployment compensation, and education assistance.

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But, cultural and societal hurdles denied access for many minority veterans. Roughly 19% of white World War II veterans earned a college degree due in part to the benefits offered by the G.I. Bill, compared to just 6% percent of Black veterans.

Since the GI Bill was federally funded but locally administered, practices such as redlining and outright racism denied Black veterans the ability to use their home loan benefits.

By lending our State's support in urging Congress pass H.R. 1255, we can send a clear message that Ohio supports all of our veterans, - regardless of conflict, regardless of branch of service, regardless of race.

Thank you.

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