AMENDMENT TO RULES COMMITTEE PRINT 115-70

OFFERED BY MR. LIPINSKI OF ILLINOIS

Page 201, after line 11, insert the following new section:

SEC. 626. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN MORALE, WELFARE, AND RECREATION PRIVILEGES TO CERTAIN VETERANS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018”.

(b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) In 2017, the Secretary of Defense determined that the addition of new patron categories to the commissary and exchange systems would support the growth of a robust customer base and help ensure the ability of both systems to provide benefits to members of the Armed Forces and their families.

(2) The Secretary previously opposed extending commissary and exchange privileges to large patron groups such as disabled veterans.
(3) In January 2017, the Secretary of Defense approved limited online exchange shopping privileges for all veterans, effective November 11, 2017.

(4) The Secretary determined that current patrons of exchanges did not perceive the extension of such privileges as diluting the benefit for members of the Armed Forces.

(5) The Purple Heart is the oldest military decoration, awarded to members of the Armed Forces who have been wounded or died in combat, fighting for the United States. Since the modern incarnation of the award was established in 1932, approximately 1,800,000 members of the Armed Forces have been awarded the Purple Heart.

c) Commissary Stores and MWR Facilities Privileges for Certain Veterans and Veteran Caregivers.—

(1) Extension of privileges.—Chapter 54 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 1065. Use of commissary stores and MWR facilities: certain veterans and caregivers for veterans

“(a) Eligibility of veterans awarded the Purple Heart.—A veteran who was awarded the Purple
Heart shall be permitted to use commissary stores and MWR facilities on the same basis as a member of the armed forces entitled to retired or retainer pay.

“(b) Eligibility of Veterans Who Are Medal of Honor Recipients.—A veteran who is a Medal of Honor recipient shall be permitted to use commissary stores and MWR facilities on the same basis as a member of the armed forces entitled to retired or retainer pay.

“(c) Eligibility of Veterans Who Are Former Prisoners of War.—A veteran who is a former prisoner of war shall be permitted to use commissary stores and MWR facilities on the same basis as a member of the armed forces entitled to retired or retainer pay.

“(d) Eligibility of Veterans With Service-Connected Disabilities.—A veteran with a service-connected disability shall be permitted to use commissary stores and MWR facilities on the same basis as a member of the armed forces entitled to retired or retainer pay.

“(e) Eligibility of Caregivers for Veterans.—A caregiver or family caregiver shall be permitted to use commissary stores and MWR facilities on the same basis as a member of the armed forces entitled to retired or retainer pay.

“(f) User Fee Authority.—(1) The Secretary of Defense shall prescribe regulations that impose a user fee
on individuals who are eligible solely under this section to purchase merchandise at a commissary store or MWR retail facility.

“(2) The Secretary shall set the user fee under this subsection at a rate that the Secretary determines will offset any increase in expenses arising from this section borne by the Department of the Treasury on behalf of commissary stores associated with the use of credit or debit cards for customer purchases, including expenses related to card network use and related transaction processing fees.

“(3) The Secretary shall deposit funds collected pursuant to a user fee under this subsection in the General Fund of the Treasury.

“(4) Any fee under this subsection is in addition to the uniform surcharge under section 2484(d) of this title.

“(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘MWR facilities’ includes—

“(A) MWR retail facilities, as that term is defined in section 1063(e) of this title; and

“(B) military lodging operated by the Department of Defense for the morale, welfare, and recreation of members of the armed forces.
“(2) The term ‘Medal of Honor recipient’ has the meaning given that term in section 1074h(c) of this title.

“(3) The terms ‘veteran’, ‘former prisoner of war’, and ‘service-connected’ have the meanings given those terms in section 101 of title 38.

“(4) The terms ‘caregiver’ and ‘family caregiver’ have the meanings given those terms in section in section 1720G(d) of title 38.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 54 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“1065. Use of commissary stores and MWR facilities: certain veterans and caregivers for veterans.”.

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 1065 of title 10, United States Code, as added by paragraph (1), shall take effect at the end of the 90-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR UPDATING EPACS FOR MILITARY COMMISSARIES.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated, out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, $500,000 to the Secretary of Defense for the purpose of updating the electronic physical access control system used by military
commissaries and exchanges so that the system may rec-
ognize and accept veteran health identification cards.

(e) Sense of Congress Regarding Individuals
Awarded the Purple Heart.—It is the sense of Con-
gress that the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with
the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, should maintain a list
of all individuals awarded the Purple Heart.