AMENDMENT TO H.R. 7900

OFFERED BY MS. SLOTKIN OF MICHIGAN

Add at the appropriate place in division E, the following:

SEC. ___. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS FOR MERCHANT MARINERS WHO SERVED DURING THE VIETNAM ERA IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIA THEATER OF OPERATIONS.

(a) Veterans Benefits for Merchant Mariners Who Served During the Vietnam Era in the Southeast Asia Theater of Operations.—

(1) Eligibility for Veterans Benefits.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the service of an eligible individual described in paragraph (2)(A) shall be considered to be active duty in determining the individual’s eligibility for veterans benefits under all laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(2) Eligible Individual.—In this section, the term “eligible individual” means an individual in the United States merchant marine who—

(A) served as a crewmember of a vessel that was in oceangoing service during the Viet-
nam Era in the Southeast Asia theater of operations; and

(B) receives a certificate of honorable discharge under paragraph (3).

(3) DOCUMENTATION OF SERVICE.—

(A) CERTIFICATE OF HONORABLE DISCHARGE.—The Secretary of Defense shall, upon application, issue a certificate of honorable discharge to an individual in the United States merchant marine who served as a crewmember of a vessel that was in oceangoing service during the Vietnam Era in the Southeast Asia theater of operations who, as determined by the Secretary, engaged in service of a nature and duration that warrants issuance of the certificate.

(B) STANDARDS RELATING TO SERVICE.—In carrying out subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall apply the same standards relating to the nature and duration of service that apply to the issuance of honorable discharges under section 401(a)(1)(B) of the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977 (38 U.S.C. 106 note).

(4) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the following definitions apply:
(A) INDIVIDUAL IN THE UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE.—The term “individual in the United States merchant marine” means any citizen or resident alien of the United States serving as a civilian or civil service member of the United States merchant marine.

(B) VIETNAM ERA.—The term “Vietnam Era” means—

(i) the period beginning on February 28, 1961, and ending on May 7, 1975, in the case of an individual in the United States merchant marine who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; and

(ii) the period beginning on August 5, 1964, and ending on May 7, 1975, in all other cases.

(b) RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (a) shall apply to an individual eligible for veterans benefits under paragraph (1) of such subsection as if such subsection had been in effect as of the last date of the individual’s service described in paragraph (2)(A) of such subsection.