

TO REVISE THE FEDERAL CHARTER FOR THE BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA, INC., TO REFLECT A CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

DECEMBER 5, 2011.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. SMITH of Texas, from the Committee on the Judiciary, submitted the following,

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 2815]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on the Judiciary, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 2815) to revise the Federal charter for the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., to reflect a change in eligibility requirements for membership, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

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Purpose and Summary

H.R. 2815 revises the Federal charter for the Blue Star Mothers of America to reflect changes in eligibility requirements for membership.

Background and Need for the Legislation

The Blue Star Mothers of America is a federally chartered organization.¹ The purposes of the corporation are “patriotic, educational, social, and for service,” and include—

- 1) perpetuating the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., and the memory of all the men and women who have served our country as members of the Armed Forces;
- 2) maintaining true allegiance to the Government of the United States;
- 3) educating members of the corporation and others not to divulge military, naval, or other Government information;
- 4) assisting in veterans’ ceremonies;
- 5) attending patriotic rallies and meetings;
- 6) fostering true democracy;
- 7) caring for unsupported mothers who gave their sons to the service of the Nation;
- 8) aiding in bringing about recognition of the need for permanent civilian defense in each community and the need to be always alert against invasion of un-American activities;
- 9) upholding the American institutions of freedom, justice, and equal rights; and
- 10) defending the United States from all enemies.²

Membership is open to “a mother, adoptive mother, or step-mother (who has given a mother’s care at least since the stepchild was age 13) [living in the U.S.] of a son or daughter who . . . is serving in the Armed Forces . . . or has served in, or has been honorably discharged from, the Armed Forces in World War II or the Korean hostilities. . . .”³ The organization has over 5,000 members in 225 chapters around the U.S.⁴

The Blue Star Mothers of America states that:

On January 22, 1942 the Flint News Advertiser printed a coupon asking Mothers of serviceman to return the coupon after filling it out. The following February 1st 300 mothers met in the Durant Hotel, in Flint Michigan. Captain George H. Maines, who had conceived the idea for this group, acted as the chair of this first meeting. It was decided that after receiving 1000 responses from the ad to form a permanent organization. . . . Chapters then formed in Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, New York, Pennsylvania, Oregon, California, Iowa and Washington. In June 1960 the organization was chartered by Congress.

Mothers volunteered throughout the tough times of World War II. They worked in hospitals, train stations, packed care packages for soldiers and were a working part of homeland security during times our time of war. The organization waned in size over the years but was held together by mothers showing pride in both their children and country. In recent times we have began to grow in

¹ See 36 U.S.C. sec. 30502.

² 36 U.S.C. sec. 30503.

³ 36 U.S.C. sec. 30504.

⁴ Information provided by the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.

strength. Being attacked on our own soil has once again started mothers hanging flags in their windows at home proclaiming pride in the fact that we have children protecting our freedom during a time of war.

Our organization . . . provides support for active duty service personnel, promotes patriotism, assists Veterans organizations, and [is] available to assist in homeland volunteer efforts to help our country remain strong.⁵

The National President of the Blue Star Mothers sent a letter to the Committee requesting that the Committee amend their Federal charter. The letter stated that:

At the National Convention held in Grand Junction Colorado in August 2010 a resolution was passed by the convention body revising the language regarding eligibility. . . . As Mothers of . . . American service members and veterans we recognize the changing family dynamics and have found it extremely important to include other 'mother[s]' who have played a part in raising these military heroes and also those mothers who are not residents of the U.S. The additional change regards amendment to the original charter language of 1960 that included only the Korean conflict and prior years since our membership consists of mothers of all conflicts.⁶

H.R. 2815 amends the Blue Star Mothers' Federal charter to open eligibility to "a mother (meaning a woman who filled the role of birth mother, adoptive mother, stepmother, foster-mother, grandmother, or legal guardian) of a person who" is serving in the Armed Forces or who has served at any time. Finally, to be eligible, the mother does not have to reside in the U.S. as long as she is a U.S. citizen.

Hearings

The Committee on the Judiciary held no hearings on H.R. 2815.

Committee Consideration

On November 17, 2011, the Committee met in open session and ordered the bill H.R. 2815 favorably reported without amendment by voice vote, a quorum being present.

Committee Votes

In compliance with clause 3(b) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee advises that there were no recorded votes during the Committee's consideration of H.R. 2815.

Committee Oversight Findings

In compliance with clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee advises that the findings and recommendations of the Committee, based on oversight activi-

⁵ Website of Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.

⁶ Letter from Wendy Hoffman, National President, Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., to Lamar Smith (Nov. 7, 2011).

ties under clause 2(b)(1) of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives, are incorporated in the descriptive portions of this report.

New Budget Authority and Tax Expenditures

Clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives is inapplicable because this legislation does not provide new budgetary authority or increased tax expenditures.

Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate

In compliance with clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee sets forth, with respect to the bill, H.R. 2815, the following estimate and comparison prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office under section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, December 2, 2011.

Hon. LAMAR SMITH, CHAIRMAN,
Committee on the Judiciary,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 2815, a bill to revise the federal charter for the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., to reflect a change in eligibility requirements for membership.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Dawn Regan, who can be reached at 226-2840.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS W. ELMENDORF,
DIRECTOR.

Enclosure

cc: Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member

H.R. 2815—A bill to revise the federal charter for the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc., to reflect a change in eligibility requirements for membership.

As ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on
November 17, 2011

H.R. 2815 would amend title 36 of the U.S. Code to expand eligibility for membership in the Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc. The bill would broaden the definition of mother to include a woman who filled the role of stepmother for any period of time in the child's life, foster mother, grandmother, or legal guardian. Also, the bill would remove the eligibility requirement that participants have to be the mothers of military members who served during World War II or the Korean hostilities. Further, eligibility would be expanded to include U.S. citizens who live outside the United States.

Because chartered organizations listed in title 36 are not agencies of the U.S. government and are not conferred Federal benefits, CBO estimates that enacting the bill would have no impact on the Federal budget. Enacting H.R. 2815 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

H.R. 2815 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of State, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Dawn Regan. The estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

Performance Goals and Objectives

The Committee states that pursuant to clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, H.R. 2815 revises the Federal charter for the Blue Star Mothers of America to reflect changes in eligibility requirements for membership.

Advisory on Earmarks

In accordance with clause 9 of rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, H.R. 2815 does not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9(e), 9(f), or 9(g) of Rule XXI.

Section-by-Section Analysis

Sec. 1. Modification of Eligibility Requirements for Membership in Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.

The section amends paragraph 1 of section 30504 of title 36 of the United States Code to modify the Blue Star Mothers' Federal charter to open eligibility to "a mother (meaning a woman who filled the role of birth mother, adoptive mother, stepmother, foster-mother, grandmother, or legal guardian) of a person who" is serving in the Armed Forces or who has served at any time. The section also amends paragraph 2 to provide that to be eligible, a mother does not have to reside in the U.S. as long as she is a U.S. citizen.

Changes in Existing Law Made by the Bill, as Reported

In compliance with clause 3(e) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in italics, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

TITLE 36, UNITED STATES CODE

* * * * *

SUBTITLE II—PATRIOTIC AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

* * * * *

PART B—ORGANIZATIONS

* * * * *

CHAPTER 305—BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA, INC.

* * * * *

§ 30504. Membership

An individual is eligible for membership in the corporation if—

(1) **[**she is a mother, adoptive mother, or stepmother (who has given a mother’s care at least since the stepchild was age 13) of a son or daughter who—**]** *she is a mother (meaning a woman who filled the role of birth mother, adoptive mother, stepmother, foster-mother, grandmother, or legal guardian) of a person who—*

(A) * * *

(B) has served in, or has been honorably discharged from, the Armed Forces **[**in World War II or the Korean hostilities**]**; and

(2) she is living in the United States *or is a United States citizen living outside the United States.*

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