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Press Release

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CONTACT: PARISH BRADEN
(202) 225-5121

U.S. Army Reverses Policy on Involuntary Separation

Thompson-led effort to correct undeserved policy addressed through Army Secretary's administrative action

*****Supporters of "Proudly Restoring Officers of Prior Enlistment Retirement Act" Laud Announcement*****

Bellefonte, PA – Secretary of the Army John McHugh has [announced](#) that prior-enlisted officers selected for involuntary separation from the service will be allowed to remain on active duty or retire at their current commissioned rank with full benefits. The policy reversal follows efforts by Members of Congress to prevent commissioned officers from being forced to retire at their highest previous enlisted rank, including legislation introduced by U.S. Representatives Glenn 'GT' Thompson (R-PA) and Tim Walz (D-MN), [H.R. 5832](#), the *Proudly Restoring Officers of Prior Enlistment Retirement (PROPER) Act*.

"Under the criteria for officer separations, these soldiers should not have been considered," Secretary McHugh stated yesterday afternoon, following the announcement. **"This is an issue of fundamental fairness, and today we have taken appropriate action. These soldiers have served their country honorably both as enlisted soldiers and, now, as officers. We owe them nothing less. We appreciate that this oversight was brought to our attention, and are glad we were able to take corrective action in the best interests of these soldiers."**

Under the Obama Administration's force restructuring and end strength reduction plan, many prior-enlisted commissioned officers were being involuntarily retired at their highest enlisted rank, despite years of service in commissioned status.

Under current law soldiers must serve a minimum of 20 years to become eligible for retirement. In order to retire with officer rank, at least 8 of those years must come after receiving a commission. Some soldiers who have served over 20 years total, but less than 8 years as commissioned officers, were being involuntarily retired at their highest enlisted rank, which equated to forced demotions and large reductions in retirement benefits.

The *PROPER Act*, which is supported by the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), the American Military Retirees Association, and the National Guard Association (NGAUS), would have enabled soldiers to keep their commissioned rank in retirement by lowering the eligibility threshold from 8 to 4 years.

The Army Secretary's decision effectively waives the eight year requirement for this small group of experienced and dedicated officers.

"Secretary McHugh made the right decision and we stand by that action," stated Rep. Thompson. **"From the start this was a flawed policy that devalued the service and sacrifice of soldiers who stepped up to lead as commissioned officers at a time when the Armed Forces needed them most. I thank Secretary McHugh for acting quickly to correct this injustice, taking lead from the PROPER Act, to assure these servicemembers are able to retire with the rank and benefits they have earned."**

"This is a welcome move and will no doubt benefit our enlisted men looking to become officers get the benefits they have earned," Rep. Walz, the highest ranking enlisted soldier to ever serve in Congress, said. **"I'm proud to have worked with Rep. Thompson and our veteran service organizations to bring this issue to light and help right a wrong."**

"MOAA applauds the actions of Secretary McHugh and the Army to rectify this inequity for prior enlisted "mustang" officers. As a former Chief of Naval Personnel, I'd particularly like to thank Reps. Thompson and Walz for their quick response to protect these servicemembers who repeatedly answered the call of duty to our nation," stated MOAA President Vice Adm. Norb Ryan, USN (Ret).

"Together, these actions right a wrong and provide these officers with the respect and compensation they deserve for their decades of selfless service and sacrifice."

"The American Military Retirees Association is very pleased with the decision that Secretary McHugh has made and is proud to have partnered with the National Military Veterans Alliance and to have supported Congressman Thompson's legislation in our combined efforts to influence the Secretary to modify the current policy affecting these officers," stated Ted Painter, National Legislative Director, American Military Retirees Association. **"This decision will relieve these officers and their families of a substantial emotional and financial burden and it will restore their faith and trust in the Army that they have dedicated much of their lives to serving."**