# Frequently Asked Questions on

# Equal Access to Air Travel for Service-Disabled Veterans

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## Q: What is the Space Available Program?

A: The Space Available Program is run by the Department of Defense (DoD). It is a no-cost benefit that allows eligible people to ride on military aircraft if extra room is available. Essentially, those who qualify to ride Space Available will be on standby if there is additional room for them to fly.

## Q: Who currently qualifies for the Space Available Program?

A: The Space Available Program is a benefit offered to active duty military, retired military, military family members, and Red Cross workers. There is a predetermined order of selection of individuals in which uniformed active duty service members, their family members, and DoD employees who are on emergency leave are selected first to ride Space Available, followed by Red Cross workers, and finally retired uniformed military service members and their family members. More information can be found on the selection order by reading pages 83-89 of the Air Transportation Eligibility Handbook.\*

\*<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/451513r.pdf>.

## Q: Why aren’t 100 percent service-disabled veterans allowed to ride Space Available?

A: Some 100 percent service-disabled veterans do not fall into any of the selection priority categories—they are not active duty, retired, or Red Cross workers.

In September, 1996, Congress redefined who is and is not eligible to become “retired” from the military. Because of this change, in most cases, those who now receive a Department of Defense rating of 100 percent service disabled do qualify as retired, but veterans who became 100 percent service disabled before September 1996 do not. The Space Available bill will allow veterans who became 100 percent disabled while on active duty prior to September 1996 to qualify for the Space Available program. (See Title 10 USC, Section 1201 (a) as Enacted on September 23, 1996 (Public Law 104-201)).

## Q: What is the current status of the Space Available bill?

A: Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) introduced the Space Available bill (HR 2264) in May 2015. As of December 31, 2015, there were 19 cosponsors on the bill. The bill is currently in the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Readiness.

## Q: Was this bill introduced in previous Congresses?

A: Yes, last Congress, the bill was introduced by Congressman Gus Bilirakis (HR 164) and Senator Jon Tester (S 346). The bill was passed by the House of Representatives as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act in 2013 and 2014. Due to procedural hurdles in the Senate, the Space Available bill has not passed the full Congress.

## Q: Who supports the Space Available bill for 100 percent service-disabled veterans?

A: Along with the National Federation of the Blind, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the most long-lasting veteran advocacy and assistance group in the United States, supports extending the Space Available Program to 100 percent service-disabled veterans. Additionally, in November 2015 Senator Bob Dole, a decorated World War II veteran, longtime Senate majority leader, and staunch advocate for veterans and Americans with disabilities, wrote a letter to Senator John McCain, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, urging him to include 100 percent service-disabled veterans in the Space Available Program.