



# COMPLIANCE@WORK

An educational resource for Legislative Branch employees and employers to help understand workplace rights and legal responsibilities under the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995

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## THE ADA AND HILL PROGRAMS SUPPORT RETURNING VETERANS

Employment  
Law Series



This November, the Office of Compliance joins the rest of the country in honoring the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans.

One of the greatest challenges for disabled veterans returning from deployment is managing their disabilities while transitioning from the military to the civilian workforce. According to a Census Bureau study, of the 19.6 million veterans living in the United States in 2013, 3.6 million had service-connected disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as adopted by the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (CAA), protects veterans and others seeking employment on the Hill from discrimination based on their disabilities. And non-profit groups are lending a hand to veterans in the employment process.

### PUTTING VETERANS TO WORK ON CAPITOL HILL

HillVets, the Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program in the House, and the Senate's Armed Forces Internship Program help veterans navigate the work environment on Capitol Hill.

HillVets was founded in 2012 by Navy veteran Justin Brown and three other veterans. Its purpose is to empower veterans and assist them in finding jobs in the public and private sectors. HillVets Board Member Jennifer Mitchell said, "HillVets is a non-profit organization that helps veterans find positions on the Hill. Our goal is to fund fellowships for veterans who want to work on the Hill and give them that first opportunity to share their experiences and talents with policymakers."



The Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program also places veterans into jobs on the Hill and in district offices. Since its start in 2008, the Program has provided fellowships in the House for 124 veterans. Currently, 39 veterans participate in two-year fellowships. According to Program Director Patricia Orsini, "We have seen lives changed these past seven years, and we continue to make a difference one veteran at a time."

The Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program helped John C. McNatt (TSgt/USAF) find a job as Veteran & Military Outreach Caseworker in Representative Kay Granger's (TX-12) office. According to McNatt, "The Wounded Warrior Fellow Program has opened many doors for me. Congresswoman Kay Granger and her staff have been incredibly friendly and accommodating of the challenges I face daily. The value of a position like this is beyond measure, and has made me feel empowered about my future."

The Senate's Sergeant at Arms (SAA) also has a program for returning veterans with disabilities. The Senate Armed Forces Internship Program (AFIP) provides meaningful

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on-the-job training and experience with the SAA that help veterans transition back to the military or civilian workforce. Internship schedules can be flexible to account for medical appointments, PT, treatments, surgery and recovery. “The internship gives recovering Service members a safe place to make mistakes, and gives them a good sense of the direction they can take their lives if they cannot continue in the military,” said Erica Miller, AFIP Manager.



**A MEMBER’S POINT OF VIEW – CONGRESSWOMAN TAMMY DUCKWORTH (IL-8)**

On November 12, 2004, just one day after the country that I was fighting to protect celebrated Veterans Day, my life changed forever. As one of the Army’s first female combat pilots, I was flying a helicopter in Iraq when I was hit by a Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG). I lost both legs and partial use of my right arm in that attack. In an instant, I went from being the highest-ranking member of my crew to the weakest. I joined the ranks of so many disabled Veterans before me, and gained an acute awareness of their struggles upon returning home.

This month, as we take time to celebrate, honor, and thank those servicemen and women who put their lives on the line for our freedom, we should also take a moment to renew our commitment to provide for their needs as civilians. For those returning home with a visible or invisible disability, the ADA is a life-changing piece of legislation that improves Veterans’ access to public and governmental buildings and helps them regain the way of life that they fought to protect.

The CAA applies thirteen workplace rights to Legislative Branch employees, including several rights secured by the ADA. The law seeks to ensure that Members and staff who work in the historic halls of Congress, as well as visitors, can access offices and Committee rooms, and that the curb cuts and sidewalks around the Capitol complex meet ADA standards.

Not all disabled Veterans have physical signs of battle. Many returning home suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). For these men and women the ADA provides accommodations so that they can take advantage of the therapy and rehabilitation needed to rejoin the workforce. Veterans with disabilities offer a unique and valued perspective to any Congressional office. They deserve free and open access to these offices. With the changes to the ADA over the last twenty-five years, the efforts of the Office of Compliance, and a commitment from Congress, we can ensure that our disabled Veterans enjoy more opportunities to fully participate in a life that is more accommodating of their needs.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

HillVets: [www.hillvets.org](http://www.hillvets.org)

The Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program: 202-226-1915

The Senate Sergeant at Arms’ Senate Armed Forces Internship Program: 202-228-2965

For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act as incorporated in the Congressional Accountability Act, visit [www.compliance.gov](http://www.compliance.gov), or call 202-724-9250.