

Braley Introduces Bill Making More Blinded Veterans Eligible for VA Adaptive Housing Grants

Written by Jeff Giertz

Tuesday, 26 June 2012 12:02

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Adaptive housing grant program makes it easier for disabled vets to live in their homes

Washington, D.C. – Rep. Bruce Braley (IA-01) today announced the introduction of legislation he's authored to help more blinded veterans qualify for a Veterans Administration grant program designed to help injured and disabled veterans live in their homes. VA adaptive housing grants provide one-time funding for permanently disabled veterans to remodel their homes and make them more disability-accessible.

Currently, to qualify for VA adaptive housing grants, a blinded veteran must have visual acuity of 5/200 or worse (meaning that individual must be five feet away from an object to see it with the same acuity that an individual with normal vision can see at 200 feet). Someone with 5/200 vision generally has an inability to distinguish whether they're in a lit environment or an unlit environment.

Many veterans who have suffered the effects of impaired vision as a result of military service do not meet this very high standard, but still face a significant disability that affects their quality of life.

Furthermore, at 20/200, federal law has a less restrictive standard for blindness than the Veterans Administration. In fact, the American Medical Association first adopted this standard for blindness in 1934, and the Social Security Administration adopted it in 1968. And other programs in the Veterans Administration use the 20/200 standard already.

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HR 5999, the Housing for Blinded Veterans Act, that Braley introduced will apply the American Medical Association and federal government's 20/200 standard for blindness to the VA's adaptive housing program. This will expand eligibility for the program to more blind veterans and create a more uniform standard for blindness across federal agencies.

"This is the definition of a common sense change," Braley said. "It's silly for the federal government to use one standard for blindness and the Veterans Administration to use another, tougher standard... and just for one program, too. Applying the commonly recognized standard for blindness to the VA adaptive housing grant program means more disabled veterans will qualify for help. Plus, it just makes sense."

Braley has been a staunch advocate for expanding veterans' eligibility for and improving the VA's adaptive housing grant program, which provides grants to permanently disabled veterans to make their homes more disability accessible. Last year, Braley introduced the [Andrew Connolly Veterans Housing Act](#), a bill that renews the adaptive housing grant program. The bill was passed by the US House last spring and is still being considered by the Senate.

Full bill text of the Housing for Blinded Veterans Act can be downloaded at the following link: <http://go.usa.gov/vGw>

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