

The House Committee on Defense and Veterans Affairs offers the following substitute to HR 1024:

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Surgeon General of the Army and the Chief, National Guard Bureau to change
2 existing policy regarding the ability of priority units within the National Guard, who have
3 a high probability of future deployment into a combat zone, to receive Warfighter Refractive
4 Eye Surgery Program (WRESP) benefits; and for other purposes.

5 WHEREAS, the Chief of Staff of the Army has written that "soldiers performing duties in
6 adverse conditions, often without timely optical fabrication support, will find the lack of
7 dependence on corrective lenses an invaluable asset in the confident execution of their
8 mission"; and

9 WHEREAS, the Chief of Staff of the Army has also written that the WRESP program "offers
10 soldiers access to corrective eye surgery and provides commanders with an important
11 medical resource for the enhancement of soldier readiness"; and

12 WHEREAS, the criteria under WRESP for selecting soldiers for laser eye correction gives
13 priority to special operations and combat arms units such as infantry, field artillery, and
14 armor battalions, as well as units whose mission involves operations at the time of battle or
15 behind hostile lines; and

16 WHEREAS, the criteria for selecting soldiers for laser eye correction provides that nonactive
17 duty personnel are not authorized treatment under the program, requires that a soldier must
18 have at least 18 months remaining on active duty at the time of surgery, and mandates that
19 treated individuals must return for follow-up visits as specified postoperatively in the
20 applicable protocol as a condition of treatment; and

21 WHEREAS, the WRESP criteria provides for conflict with regard to the existence of soldiers
22 within the National Guard who fall under the WRESP criteria as priority units yet fail to meet
23 the criteria for time remaining on active duty, as National Guard soldiers typically spend 365
24 days on active duty; and

H. R. 1024 (SUB)

1 WHEREAS, priority units within the National Guard who are called to active duty are asked
2 to perform the same tasks and duties as their full-time active duty counterparts yet are unable
3 to participate in WRESP and therefore are at risk of being unable to perform their duties as
4 effectively or as safely as their full-time active duty counterparts; and

5 WHEREAS, Department of Defense regulations require a minimum of 90 days to notify
6 National Guard units of alert to active duty, and WRESP regulations require a 90 day
7 recovery period following corrective surgery, and this conflict of scheduling hinders the
8 ability of WRESP priority units within the National Guard to receive corrective eye surgery;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, the Army should consider corrective eye surgery under WRESP to be a vital
11 part of adequately preparing soldiers for combat duty, just as pre-deployment training is, and,
12 just as is done for pre-deployment training, should set aside time for corrective eye surgery
13 to be completed; and

14 WHEREAS, just as combat training schools set aside a percentage of placements in their
15 courses for National Guard soldiers, a percentage of surgical slots for corrective laser eye
16 surgery under WRESP should be set aside for National Guard soldiers; and

17 WHEREAS, questions of priority and time are recognized, and therefore, the following
18 actions should be pursued: classification as a "priority" unit in terms of eligibility for
19 WRESP should be based upon the actual role of the unit in a combat zone rather than the
20 unit's status as active duty or National Guard; identification of priority (i.e. Special
21 Operations) units within the National Guard who have a high probability of being called to
22 active duty and scheduled for rotation be carried out by establishing an allotment of a
23 minimum of six months prior to highly probable deployment for such units to ensure
24 adequate time for postoperative recovery and required checkups and notification of active
25 duty alert; and

26 WHEREAS, the ongoing War in Iraq has taken a significant toll on the National Guard, and
27 providing benefits for priority units within it will aid in its continuing mission in the Middle
28 East; and

29 WHEREAS, if the aforementioned actions are taken, all units, whether full-time active duty
30 or National Guard, who can be classified as priority units will be adequately prepared to

1 effectively and safely carry out their duties and advance the mission of the United States
2 Army in the ongoing Global War on Terror.

3 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
4 GEORGIA that the members of this body urge the Surgeon General of the Army and the
5 Chief, National Guard Bureau to change existing regulations to enable priority units within
6 the National Guard, for whom a call to active duty is highly probable, to receive corrective
7 laser eye surgery under WRESP.

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
9 and directed to transmit appropriate copies of this resolution to each member of the Georgia
10 congressional delegation; the Secretary of Defense; and the Chief, National Guard Bureau.