

Bradley's Pro Bono Efforts Drive U.S. House of Representative's Bipartisan Passage of Legislation Protecting Disabled Veterans

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (July 25, 2019) – For over two years, attorneys at [Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP](#) have worked pro bono to change U.S. bankruptcy laws to better protect disabled veterans in financial distress. This week, Bradley's efforts took a significant step forward as the House of Representatives passed the [Honoring American Veterans in Extreme Need Act of 2019, HR 2938 \(the "HAVEN Act"\)](#), with overwhelming bipartisan support.

The HAVEN Act will protect the economic security of disabled veterans experiencing financial hardship. Under current bankruptcy law, veterans' disability benefits are included as part of their disposable income – even though comparable Social Security disability benefits are not. The unequal treatment of veterans' disability benefits limits financially distressed disabled veterans' access to bankruptcy relief and makes it more difficult for them to obtain a financial fresh start.

[Jay Bender](#), a partner in Bradley's Bankruptcy and Creditors' Rights Practice Group, has led Bradley's efforts with respect to the HAVEN Act, working closely with Bradley partner [David Stewart](#) and other members of the firm's Governmental Affairs Practice Group. Mr. Bender was instrumental in the drafting of the original HAVEN Act bill back in 2017, and currently co-chairs the Legislative Committee of the [American Bankruptcy Institute's](#) Task Force on Veterans and Service Members Affairs that has actively promoted the HAVEN Act on Capitol Hill. Mr. Stewart, along with his governmental affairs colleagues Katie Ashley, Paul Kavinoky, Nathan Ridley, and Ricky Callaway, have helped develop the legislative strategy for the HAVEN Act's passage and have used their extensive network in Washington to curry support for the bill.

Although the U.S. Senate has not yet voted on the HAVEN Act as a stand-alone bill, its prospects there are promising. To date, over 40 members – split evenly between Democrats and Republicans -- of the 100-seat Senate are signed on as sponsors of the HAVEN Act (S. 679), which is pending before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Meanwhile, the HAVEN Act was included as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act recently passed by the Senate as part of its military budget bill for fiscal year 2020.

“We are thrilled by the House of Representative’s passage of the HAVEN Act and the great bipartisan support it received. We are optimistic that the Senate will soon follow suit so that the HAVEN Act can become law as soon as possible to give disabled veterans the financial relief they may need,” said Mr. Bender.

Mr. Stewart, the head of Bradley’s Governmental Affairs Practice Group, added, “It’s gratifying to see the overwhelming support the HAVEN Act has received from Republicans and Democrats alike. It’s been an honor to be part of the Bradley team working on this bill, and to help provide some long overdue relief to veterans who have given so much for our country.”

About Bradley

Bradley combines skilled legal counsel with exceptional client service and unwavering integrity to assist a diverse range of corporate and individual clients in achieving their business goals. With offices in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and the District of Columbia, the firm’s over 500 lawyers represent regional, national and international clients in various industries, including financial services, healthcare, life sciences, real estate, construction, technology, energy, insurance, and entertainment, among many others.

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