



A NEW DIRECTION FOR VETERANS & TROOPS

Under Democratic leadership since 2007, New Direction Congresses have made historic gains for America's Troops, Veterans, and Military Families.

Status

EXPAND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- New GI Bill to restore promise of a full, four-year college education for 2 million veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and their families; veterans can sign up now. ★
- Give businesses a \$2,400 tax credit for hiring unemployed veterans. ★
- Provide nearly 2 million disabled veterans a \$250 Economic Recovery payment. ★
- Help military family homeowners harmed by the housing crisis. ★
- Expand relief, homeownership opportunities, and refinancing options for returning veterans through VA home loans. ★
- Create a new Veterans Corps to provide services to veterans and military families, as well as create volunteer opportunities for veterans to put them back to work. ★

STRENGTHEN HEALTH CARE

- Authorize Congress to provide VA medical investments one year in advance to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding, the #1 priority of veterans' organizations. ★
- Increase funding for veterans' health care and other services by \$23 billion (60%) since January 2007 – including the largest single increase in the history of the VA. This is more of an increase in three years than the GOP-controlled Congress provided in 12 years. ★
 - Strengthened quality health care for 5.5 million veterans – adding 12,000 new doctors and nurses since 2007, increasing Vet Centers and mobile health centers, and expanding access for rural veterans*
- FY 2010 veterans' budget hailed as "cause for celebration" by American Legion, provides veterans' health care and other services the largest funding increase (nearly 12%) ever requested by a President. ★
 - Expands mental health screening and treatment*
 - Ends ban on enrolling modest-income veterans for VA health care, imposed by Bush*
 - Strongly supported by major veterans' organizations, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America*
- Clean up the scandal of inadequate support for our wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and facilities nationwide. ★
 - Improve outpatient medical care, restore integrity and efficiency to disability evaluations, cut red-tape*
 - Smooth the transition from the Armed Forces to VA health care system— implementing a single, accurate paperless health record from enlistment through retirement years*
 - Rebuild and renovate VA and military hospitals*

Strengthen mental health services critical to the estimated 620,000 returning troops from Iraq or Afghanistan suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, or traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

Expand VA mental health care services, invest one-third more than in FY 2006, and provide three years of more VA health care eligibility for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans



Require comprehensive DOD policy to address TBI and PTSD, establish a DOD Center of Excellence on Psychological Health and TBI, guarantee veterans a mental health assessment within 30 days, and expand hiring of mental health professionals



Invest in DOD research for TBI and PTSD, along with counseling, suicide prevention, tele-health and risk reduction efforts for troops and families



Establish comprehensive suicide prevention services for veterans and a 24-hour toll-free suicide hotline, helping to prevent an estimated 1,200 suicides in first year



Establish mandatory and confidential one-on-one mental health screening for all returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans



Prevent TRICARE and veterans' health care fee increases proposed by President Bush, and proposed TRICARE fee increases proposed last year.



IMPROVE BENEFITS FOR TROOPS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Give troops a pay raise of 3.5 percent in 2008 and 3.9 percent in 2009 – larger than President Bush's budget in both years. The pay raise is 3.4 percent in 2010.



Retroactively provide more than 185,000 service members and veterans with \$500 for every month they were forced to serve under stop-loss orders since 2001.



Address the 396,000 veterans' claim backlog and the long wait for veterans to access earned benefits by adding 8,300 new claims processors since 2007.



Build new transition centers for wounded warriors, more military child care centers, and better barracks and military family housing.



Provide Family Medical Leave for families of soldiers wounded in combat.



Reduce Military Families Tax on surviving spouses.



REBUILD THE AMERICAN MILITARY

Provide troops in Iraq and Afghanistan with better equipment, including Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles proven to save lives.



Create Strategic Reserve Readiness Fund to rapidly address military equipment shortfalls.



Ensure more equipment, training, and body armor for troops.



Strengthen National Guard preparedness for disaster response here at home, including providing more equipment.



★ = Signed Into Law, 110th Congress ☆ = Signed Into Law, 111th Congress ★ = Passed House, 111th Congress