



Honor and Remember

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Memorial Day 2011

Veterans.House.Gov

Dear Colleague,

Memorial Day is this coming Monday (May 30). As Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have the honor of speaking with America's veterans, their families, and survivors every day. I learn from these men and women the meaning of sacrifice. And that is the meaning of Memorial Day—it is the one day a year we come together as a nation to recognize the sacrifice of the hundreds of thousands of men and women who have given their lives in defense of our country.

This past Monday, we passed the first pieces of legislation of the 112th Congress for veterans, including fixes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, put into place a new process for the placement of monuments at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as the enforcement of the reservation process, and penalties for small businesses claiming veteran-owned status.

We have a busy year ahead of us. Too many of the promises made to our veterans were made in word only, not deed. We must ensure legislation that is passed is thoughtful, comprehensive, and safeguards the veteran. We are working on finding solutions to lower the unemployment rate among veterans, ensure veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury receive effective treatment, decrease the shameful backlog of claims for disability benefits (which has increased yet again this year), and build a more collaborative relationship between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, beginning with a single Disability Evaluation System.

These are tough times, and many will have to sacrifice. But we should not, and will not, ask those who sacrificed so much already, to sacrifice again. It is up to all of us to keep the promise to our veterans, while restoring fiscal responsibility. The Noble Generation of veterans has protected us for more than a decade. They are our future, and our investment in them today will keep America strong tomorrow.

The Committee has put together this packet for your use this Memorial Day to honor and remember the fallen. We hope you find it helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact the Committee at (202) 225-3527 should you have any questions on this or any other veteran-related topic. My staff prides themselves on being responsive to Member's questions and concerns.

Thank you for your continued support of America's veterans.



JEFF MILLER

Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs



History of Memorial Day

*I*n 1868, three years after the end of the Civil War, Major General John A. Logan declared Decoration Day would be observed on May 30 at Arlington National Cemetery and thousands of citizens laid flowers at the graves sites of fallen service members. Although the official Decoration Day occurred at Arlington, many local cities in both the North and South also claimed to be the first to recognize Decoration Day. Among them were Macon and Columbus, Georgia, Richmond, Virginia, as well as Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, and Carbondale, Illinois, the home of Major General Logan. By the end of the 19th century, cities across the country were holding ceremonies on May 30, and several state legislatures passed proclamations designating May 30 as Memorial Day.

It was not until the end of World War I that Memorial Day was expanded to include all troops who had fallen in all American wars. In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson and Congress declared Waterloo, New York, as the official “birthplace” of Memorial Day and in 1971, Congress officially declared Memorial Day as a national holiday, placing it on the last Monday of May.

Today on Memorial Day, flags are often placed at veterans’ grave sites around the country.

What Are Survivor Benefits?

*W*hen a service member passes on, VA may provide benefits to certain dependents and survivors of the service member. Many different benefits are available, including Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC), Death Pension, Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance (DEA), Life Insurance, and Burial Benefits.

DIC is the most common type of survivor benefit. The basic monthly rate of DIC is \$1,154 for an eligible surviving spouse, although the rate is increased for each dependent child, and also if the surviving spouse is housebound or in need of aid and attendance.

DEA provides education and training opportunities for up to 45 months for the son, daughter, or spouse of certain fallen service members. These benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training.

Today, approximately 388,000 families are receiving survivorship benefits.





Inside the GI Bill

*T*he Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011 temporarily authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to pay tuition and fees on behalf of eligible veterans attending non-public education and training institutions under the Post-9/11 GI Bill in an amount that is the greater of \$17,500, or the maximum in-state rate for undergraduate tuition and fees in effect on October 27, 2010. This temporary change would prevent students who have already enrolled in high-cost, non-public schools from experiencing a reduction in tuition and fees paid by VA on their behalf due to changes made under Public Law 111-377, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010.

During World War II, Congress held three weeks of hearings, called more than 50 witnesses, and solicited the input of numerous federal agencies to get the original GI Bill right. Unfortunately, that was not the case when Congress passed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010. We are, therefore, striving to deliver what was originally promised to GI Bill recipients.

The bill's cost has been offset by a one-year extension in certain existing home loan funding fees (revenue through the VA), while not adding to the national deficit. It is our hope the Senate will take this up and pass the legislation to ensure the estimated 30,000 veterans affected will be able to remain in school come August 1, 2011.

Hot Topics

- » It is imperative we cut up the administration's credit cards and balance the budget so we can keep our promise to veterans. Under the Path to Prosperity, benefits to veterans will NOT be cut despite news reports to the contrary.
 - » Reducing the disability claims backlog through new and innovative approaches.
 - » The Committee is working to ensure VA implements The Caregiver and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 as intended in order to better support the caregivers of America's wounded warriors.
 - » Despite thousands of additional mental health providers at the VA, suicides among veterans are at an all-time high.
- 



Themes & Messages

VA BENEFITS WILL NOT BE CUT

- » Those who have sacrificed for this country will not be asked to sacrifice again.
- » The Committee's promise is to ensure the highest quality of care and benefits for veterans.
- » The Committee will ensure accountability, sustainability, and efficiency in VA programs and reduce redundancies where appropriate.
- » It is imperative to cut up the administration's credit cards and balance the budget so we can keep our promise to veterans.

TRANSFORMING THE VA

- » Modernize and update antiquated systems (such as the claims process), while streamlining services to improve care and reduce redundancies in VA, DoD, DoL, and HUD.
 - » Veterans wait an average of more than 180 days for claims to be processed. This process must be simplified and transferred to a paperless, rules-based adjudication system. A veteran's claim should be adjudicated right the first time and in a timely and accurate manner.
 - » The DoD and VA have been working toward reducing the bureaucracy to facilitate the transition from DoD to VA for veterans. However, a fully integrated single medical database has yet to be implemented. The time is now. The Committee will work to institute a jointly developed program to align electronic medical records between the departments and establish a single Disability Evaluation System, as well as encourage a more productive and substantive DoD-VA partnership.
 - » Assess the planned renovation of VA's aging health care facilities to modernize buildings and provide better care.
 - » Meet the needs of today's veterans while keeping the promise to yesterday's veterans through better outreach and communication.
- 



A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY CARE

- » The Committee is focused on prevention practices and programs that aim to heal veterans in order to lead productive lives, including specific programs for at-risk veterans.
- » The Committee will encourage medical research investments in the areas of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and prosthetics to provide state-of-the-art care for veterans.
- » The mission of VA is to provide the highest quality of care to all veterans for as long as necessary, regardless of location. The Committee is focused on expanding private care options in rural areas to supplement VA healthcare.
- » The Committee is working with VSOs and community groups to find holistic approaches that reach across the spectrum of VA's programs to meet ongoing needs in the veteran community.

SIMPLIFYING ACCESS AND HELPING AT-RISK VETERANS

- » Expand specialized services for female veterans.
 - » Decrease the homeless veteran population. The 112th Congress included an increase of \$50 M to keep veterans off the streets (a request not submitted by either the administration or approved in the 111th Congress).
 - » Collaborate with private organizations to assist veterans coping with PTS and TBI in utilizing community-based resources.
 - » Improve and expand job training programs in the private sector to increase employment opportunities for veterans.
 - » Support the families of veterans, specifically caregivers and survivors.
 - » Engage holistic approaches aimed at preventing the problems that plague the benefits system at the VA, providing veterans with the tools to lead productive lives in society, before problems occur. It is not enough to provide shelter for one night, one counseling session, one job fair, we must strive for solutions that allow veterans to live meaningful lives. We must provide veterans with choices.
- 

Memorial Day Ideas & Outreach



- » Visit veterans at a VA Medical Center. Click [here](#) to find a medical center near you.
- » Visit a Vet Center to speak with the employees who are directly helping our veterans. Click [here](#) to find a Center in your district.
- » Pay your respects for the fallen at one of the 131 National Cemeteries for Veterans. Locations can be found [here](#).
- » Visit wounded troops, veterans, and their families at a Fisher House. Find a location [here](#).
- » Volunteer for an Honor Flight bringing World War II veterans to visit their memorial in Washington, D.C. Click [here](#) to volunteer.
- » Walk in a local parade, or attend a VSO Post meeting (find a location [here](#)).
- » Record a district veteran's history for the Veterans' History Project. Learn more [here](#).
- » Donate your frequent flyer airline miles to [Operation Hero Miles](#) to help bring the family members of wounded warriors to their loved one's bedside.
- » For more ideas, visit the National WWII Museum [website](#).
- » To find more events in your district, please click [here](#).





Staying in Washington?

ROLLING THUNDER MOTORCYCLE RALLY: Sunday, May 29, 2011. Departure from the Pentagon at 12 p.m. Speaker Program and Musical Tribute at 1:30 p.m., at the Reflecting Pool across from the Lincoln Memorial.

NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY CONCERT: Sunday, May 29, 2011, 8 p.m. Gates open at 5 p.m., West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol. The concert features actors Joe Mantegna and Gary Sinise, and other guest artists along with the National Symphony Orchestra.

WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL: Monday, May 30, 2011, 9 a.m. The National Park Service and the Friends of the National World War II Memorial will sponsor a wreath-laying ceremony in honor of our veterans. Guest speakers will give remarks. The theme for the commemoration is “Honoring our Fallen Warriors.”

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL: Monday, May 30, 2011, 1 p.m. This year’s annual Memorial Day ceremony includes Presentation of the Colors, remarks by a special guest, and wreath-laying service.

NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY PARADE: Monday, May 30, 2011, beginning at 2 p.m. The parade of Marching Bands and Veterans units from all 50 states steps off at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 7th Streets, NW and proceeds along Constitution Avenue.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY: Flags-In. Soldiers from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) will be joined by service members from the U.S. Marine Corps Ceremonial and Guard Company, U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard, U.S. Air Force Honor Guard, and the U.S. Coast Guard Ceremonial Honor Guard in placing more than 250,000 grave decorating flags at Arlington National Cemetery. The flags will remain through Memorial Day. On Monday, May 30, 2011, 11 a.m., a wreath-laying ceremony and concert will be held at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in honor of Memorial Day.

TAPS ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND: Participate in one of the largest survivor weekends in the country, including a walk to pay tribute to the fallen across the National Mall. Learn more here.





SPC TOM, TROY ACO 18 AUG 09

CPT HALLETT, JOHN ACO 25 AUG 09

SFC SAWYER, RONALD HHC 25 AUG 09

PFC BROCHU, JORDAN CCO 31 AUG 09

SPC WALSHE, TYLER CCO 31 AUG 09

COUMAS, KYLE ACO 21 OCT 09

UFFIN, DALE CCO 27 OCT 09

AROSA, FERNANDO CCO 27 OCT 09

S, CHRISTOPHER CCO 27 OCT 09

ON, ISAAC CCO 27 OCT 09

GARY CCO 5 NOV 09

PFC YANNEY, JONATHAN HHC 18 AUG 09

CPT JENKINS, CORY HHC 25 AUG 09

SPC WILLIAMS, DENNIS ACO 25 AUG 09

SPC WELCH, JONATHAN CCO 31 AUG 09

SPC GRAHAM, KEVIN ACO 26 SEP 09

SPC DAHL, MICHAEL BCO 17 OCT 09

SSG GONZALEZ, LUIS CCO 27 OCT 09

SGT WILLIAMSON, PATRICK CCO 27 OCT 09

SPC STANKER, JARED CCO 27 OCT 09

SPC AAMOT, AARON CCO 5 NOV 09

SPC PACI, ANTHONY BCO 4 MAR 10



FALLEN
BUT NOT
FORGOTTEN

Veterans Outreach Program

Show your support for America's veterans and their families every day of the year by building a Veterans Outreach Program. Please contact the Committee for more information.

Recommendations include:

- » Encourage veterans in your district to reach out to the OEF/OIF generation of veterans.
- » Host a Veterans Roundtable, Veteran Job Fair, or speak to student veterans' groups at a local campus.
- » Write an Op-Ed for your local newspaper about how you support America's veterans and their families.
- » Recognize a service-disabled or veteran-owned small business and/or recognize a company that hires veterans.
- » Keep your examples local and listen to the problems cited by veterans. Report any trends to the Committee.