



United States Senator

Kent Conrad

North Dakota

August 2008

Dear Friends,

Our nation faces a great challenge to care for our veterans' well being. Demand for health care for our veterans is growing. The increasing numbers of men and women returning from service overseas means an even greater emphasis must be placed on delivering the resources needed to care for our heroes.

We have a solemn obligation to honor our veterans by delivering the best health care our federal government can provide. As a United States Senator from North Dakota, a state with a proud tradition of military service, it is my duty and privilege to work everyday on behalf of all our veterans and their loved ones.

This Veterans Report provides a brief summary of issues before Congress that matter to veterans and their families. As you will see, we've made great progress in a number of areas. Still, more needs to be done. We need to continue to work together to ensure that our veterans of today and tomorrow receive the care and respect they deserve.

Sincerely,

Kent Conrad
United States Senator

Conrad's Budget Supports Vets Health

As Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, Senator Conrad made quality health care for veterans a priority when he wrote the 2009 Congressional Budget Resolution. The result was a record level of \$48.2 billion for Veterans Affairs discretionary funding, including health care.

"America made a solemn promise to its veterans, and I will do everything I can to make sure we keep that promise," Senator Conrad said. "As more and more veterans return from the Middle East, we are learning about the great toll taken on those who served. We must renew our pledge to meet their health care needs, as well as the needs of our older veterans."

In the two years since Senator Conrad assumed the chairmanship of the Budget Committee, the congressional budget has dramatically increased resources to care for our nation's veterans over proposals put forth by the White House. This most recent budget calls for an increase in veterans' funding by \$3.3 billion more in discretionary spending than what was sought by the Administration.

Senator Conrad's budgets have also met the funding requested in the independent budget put forth by America's leading veterans organizations.



Dickinson – Senator Conrad meets with veterans at the opening of the new VA community based outpatient clinic.

Conrad Breaks Ground on New Vets Home

In June, Senator Conrad joined community leaders to help break ground on the new North Dakota Veterans Home, a 150-bed facility to care for veterans. He helped secure \$15.9 million in federal funding to construct the home.

“North Dakota’s wounded warriors deserve the finest care our country can provide. They have made great sacrifices in defense of our freedom. While we can never fully repay them for their service, we can make every effort to meet their health care needs once they return home,” Senator Conrad said.

Working with the other members of North Dakota’s congressional delegation, Senator Conrad secured a priority listing for federal funds for the Lisbon project through the VA State Home Grant program. As a result of the delegation’s efforts and overwhelming public support, the state legislature approved an additional \$6.4 million in state funding for the new veterans home.



Lisbon – Senator Conrad is joined by two veterans as he helps break ground on the new Veterans Home.

Honor Flights – A Fitting Tribute to the Greatest Generation

For the past 18 months, Senator Conrad has paid special tribute to North Dakota veterans and their families by helping to arrange visits to the nation’s capital as part of the “WWII Honor Flight.”

The statewide initiative was spearheaded by Fargo-based radio show host Tracy Briggs to help North Dakota and Minnesota World War II veterans travel to Washington, DC, to visit the newly built National World War II Memorial. These trips were provided at no cost to the veterans. To date, the Honor Flight has helped more than 600 World War II veterans visit the National World War II Memorial.

“Because of the generosity of so many North Dakotans, hundreds of veterans have traveled at no expense to Washington to receive a hero’s welcome,” Senator Conrad said. “This trip represents a grateful nation’s way of saying thank you to a group of heroes that is deservedly known as ‘The Greatest Generation.’”

New G.I. Bill Fulfills Promise to Future Vets

Knowing that our veterans will provide the next generation of America’s leaders, Senator Conrad helped push the 21st Century G.I. Bill through Congress earlier this year. The legislation grants scholarships to public, in-state colleges for veterans who served three years in the military.

Learn more about the 21st Century G.I. Bill by visiting www.gibill.va.gov

“The new G.I. Bill is a resounding victory for veterans in North Dakota and across the nation. It strengthens America’s military and provides our veterans with the support they need and deserve.”

Woody Keeble Honored as ‘Bravest of the Brave’

Honoring one of North Dakota’s most decorated service members and the state’s most recent recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, Senator Conrad joined family and friends in paying respect to Master Sgt. Woodrow Keeble at the unveiling of his Medal of Honor headstone in May.

“This is a proud day for the Keeble family and all North Dakotans,” Senator Conrad said. “It is appropriate that Woody’s final resting place at long last reflects what we have always known – that he will be remembered as one of North Dakota’s, and the nation’s, greatest heroes.”



Sisseton – Senator Conrad addresses the family and friends of Master Sgt. Woodrow Keeble at the unveiling of his Medal of Honor headstone.

After serving with distinction in World War II, Keeble returned to service in the Korean War. On Oct. 20, 1951 he was near Kumsong battling the Chinese. With his fellow soldiers pinned down by heavy enemy gunfire, Keeble - already wounded - made his way up a hill and took out four machine gun bunkers, killing nine enemy soldiers.

A Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Sioux, Keeble is one of the most decorated soldiers in history, yet he was never considered for the Medal of Honor due to bureaucratic mix-ups. It was only after years of work by his family, Senator Conrad, and others that Keeble was formally considered for the Medal of Honor.

Conrad Fights to Protect Families of Fallen Soldiers

Earlier this year, Senator Conrad sponsored legislation that would shield the families of fallen soldiers from debt owed to the federal government.

“Recently, we have seen a growing number of cases in which the families of fallen soldiers have received bills for student loans or other outstanding debts owed by that soldier. That is callous and it defies common sense,” Senator Conrad said. “By adopting this legislation, we will protect and honor these grieving families who have already sacrificed greatly.”

The Combat Veterans Debt Elimination Act would reverse current policy that requires the Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary to collect debt such as college tuition assistance from the families of service members who have given their lives defending our nation.

While the number of affected families to date is relatively small, Senator Conrad said that it is likely the number will increase, given the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The bill is retroactive to September 11, 2001.

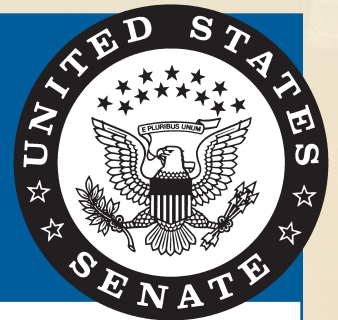
To learn more about the Combat Veterans Debt Elimination Act, contact your local Veterans Service Office or visit www.conrad.senate.gov



Interested in receiving veterans related e-mail updates? Visit www.conrad.senate.gov and sign up for regular updates from Senator Conrad on issue areas important to you – delivered direct to your e-mail inbox.

North Dakota's Disabled American Veterans present Senator Conrad with a token of their appreciation for 'going to bat' for the state's veterans.

Senator Kent Conrad's **Veterans Report**



How to Contact Senator Conrad:

North Dakota Toll-Free Number: 1 (800) 223-4457

Washington Office

530 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-2043

Bismarck Office

220 East Rosser Avenue
Federal Building #228
Bismarck, ND 58501
(701) 258-4648

Fargo Office

657 2nd Avenue North
Federal Building #306
Fargo, ND 58102
(701) 232-8030

Grand Forks Office

102 North 4th Street
Federal Building #104
Grand Forks, ND 58203
(701) 775-9601

Minot Office

100 1st Street Southwest
Federal Building #105
Minot, ND 58701
(701) 852-0703

Online: www.conrad.senate.gov