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GINNY BROWN-WAITE
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GREETINGS,

The Veterans' Update is a newsletter created to keep you abreast of issues and legislation important to the veterans of Florida's 5th Congressional District. I hope that you find this issue informative and educational. If you need any help with the benefits or care you receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), please do not hesitate to contact my Brooksville district office toll-free at (866) 492-4835.

Sincerely,
GINNY BROWN-WAITE
Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite



REP. BROWN-WAITE TESTIFIES BEFORE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON THE NEED FOR TIMELY ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

As part of her efforts to ensure veterans have prompt access to health care, Ginny recently introduced H.R. 5622, the *Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act*. Under H.R. 5622, if a veteran cannot get an appointment with a primary care physician within thirty days of a request, that veteran may see a private physician at no additional cost.



Ginny Testifies About the Need to Pass Her Legislation on Access to Health Care

This bill contains provisions similar to those found in other bills Ginny has introduced in the past; however, H.R. 5622 is unique in several ways.

First, H.R. 5622 would create a pilot program that encompasses Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 8, which includes most of Florida, Southern Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The pilot program would give veterans receiving healthcare in VISN 8 the opportunity to seek healthcare from a primary care provider outside the VA if they have to wait more than thirty days for an appointment through the VA.

It is more than reasonable for a veteran to expect to be seen by a primary care physician within thirty days. If the VA cannot provide this basic service to our veterans, then our veterans should have the option to look elsewhere. Ginny's bill does not "force" any veteran out of the VA system, it provides them the option to go outside the VA system if they desire.

Should a veteran decide to see a physician outside the system, it is imperative that the VA be able to keep track of that veteran's medical records, to ensure continuity of care. H.R. 5622 lets the VA work with private medical providers to obtain records from these out of network visits.

This provision is critical, as the goal of H.R. 5622 is to ensure veterans not only receive access to timely healthcare, but to quality healthcare as well. As a Member of Congress from VISN 8, Ginny would like to make this option available to the veterans in and around her district. There is no reason any veteran should have to wait more than thirty days to receive basic healthcare.

VA CREATES NEW OFFICE TO COORDINATE HIRING VETERANS

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Dr. James B. Peake recently announced the creation of a new Veterans Employment Coordination Service to oversee efforts to recruit new veterans into the VA workforce, especially recently disabled combat veterans. The new



Ginny and Hernando County Families Meet to Discuss the Emergency War Supplemental Funding Our Troops

office will work with military transition programs, veteran's service organizations and other programs to promote careers in the VA.

The program will also work with VA managers and human resource offices to ensure supervisors are aware of programs for hiring veterans. Efforts to assist severely injured veterans have already begun with the Department's participation in local career fairs targeting veterans of the Global War on Terror.

About 31 percent of VA's 260,000 employees are veterans, and nearly eight percent are service-connected disabled veterans. VA ranks first among non-Defense agencies in the hiring of disabled veterans and is second only to the Department of Defense in the overall number of veterans on the workforce. Last fiscal year, VA hired more than 9,000 veterans.

WORLD WAR II NAVY ARMED GUARD VETERANS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR CONGRESSIONAL CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

During World War II, members of the Navy Armed Guard Service fought bravely on behalf of United States' efforts to win the war and defeat the Axis superpowers. With more than 144,000 members fighting on 6,000 plus ships throughout the seas, these brave men helped fight for freedom and democracy throughout the world.



Ginny and Local Veterans Discuss Legislative Efforts to Get a Congressional Certificate of Appreciation for Naval Armed Guard Service

While nearly 2,000 members of the Navy Armed Guard were killed in action, it was not until 1999 that they were officially recognized by Congress for their bravery and actions. This legislation makes it clear that the Navy Armed Guard played a vital role in helping merchant ships deliver their goods to battle locations in Europe and Asia.

With this official recognition from Congress, Navy Armed Guard Service members are authorized to apply for a Congressional Certificate of Appreciation. To find out if you are eligible for this long-overdue honor, please contact Ginny's office toll-free at 866-492-4835. Veterans will need to provide a copy of their DD-214 and have been honorably discharged from the armed services.

21ST CENTURY GI BILL INCLUDED IN EMERGENCY WAR SUPPLEMENTAL

The U.S. House recently passed an amendment to a spending bill for our troops that included the text of legislation championed by Ginny to expand and improve the Montgomery GI Bill for 21st Century soldiers and veterans. This new GI Bill, H.R. 5740, the *Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act*, will expand benefits to American military members and offer new educational benefits to the National Guard and Reserve.

Since September 11, 2001, our nation has been involved in a historic battle against radical Islamic fundamentalists who have perverted their religious beliefs to justify attacks on innocent Americans and our allies around the world. After six and a half years, we have seen tremendous success in defeating terrorist regimes and protecting our homeland, with many soldiers having completed their tours of duty and met their service commitment.

That is why Ginny is so proud to be the lead Republican sponsor of legislation to extend the education benefits of the Montgomery GI Bill to this latest generation of American soldiers.

If Guard and Reserve members are asked to bear a greater burden than in past conflicts, Congress should provide similar benefits to them as to our full-time military members. As one of the most successful government programs ever

instituted, the Montgomery GI Bill has helped millions of returning soldiers get the education they need to compete in a global workforce. This generation of heroes should be treated no differently.

Ginny's legislation says that those members of the Guard and Reserve who served on active duty in post-9/11 conflict should receive full educational benefits under the new GI Bill. Currently, many of these members are ineligible for educational benefits when they return from combat, and without this legislation will not get the support needed to help build a strong future.

If America is going to send these brave soldiers into combat for lengths of time similar to the rest of the Armed Forces, then they should receive similar benefits, including the Montgomery GI Bill education benefit. This new bipartisan GI Bill is one of the most important things this Congress can do to support our troops returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan; give our heroes the quality education needed to advance their careers and make better lives for themselves and their families.



Ginny Joins Senators Hagel and Warner to Explain the Expanded Benefits of the New GI Bill to Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars

RANKING MEMBER BROWN-WAITE PUSHES VA TO IMPROVE CARE FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a recent hearing on VA and DOD procedures for evaluating and treating vision problems associated with traumatic brain injury (TBI). As the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Ginny noted that advances in medical science and technology have saved lives that would have been lost in earlier wars, but many survivors today are left with devastating disabilities.

Noting that this war is different from those of the past, Ginny told the Subcommittee that soldiers' injuries that would have resulted in death in previous conflicts now have a large survival rate. However, survival doesn't necessarily mean returning home whole. With the enemy's weapon of choice, the improvised explosive device, many of our most severely injured veterans have TBI, and have been treated at one of the Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers.

After hearing from the witnesses and VA officials, it was clear that medical centers need to share their best practices with one another, so that veterans and servicemembers receive the best care possible. This is particularly critical in the area of TBIs, where treatment can be very cutting edge. Some of the finest TBI research is currently being performed at the James Haley VA Hospital in Tampa, Florida. Ginny will continue to pressure the VA and DOD to ensure that our returning veterans receive the finest medical care possible.

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