



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 for the 21st Century takes effect August 1 to restore promise of a full, four-year college education for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan; veterans can sign up for 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 create volunteer opportunities for veterans to put them back to work.



STRENGTHEN HEALTH CARE

Increase funding for veterans' health care and other services by \$17.7 billion (more than 40%) since January 2007 -- including the largest single increase in the history of the VA. This is more of an increase in less than three years than the GOP-controlled Congress provided in 12 years.



Strengthened quality health care for 5.8 million patients -- adding more than 8,000 new doctors and nurses since 2007

Veterans' budget this year 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 Bush's ban on enrolling modest-income veterans for VA health care

Allows Congress to provide VA medical investments one year in advance to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding

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 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 suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, or traumatic brain injuries (TBI) from Iraq or Afghanistan.

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, expand hiring of mental health professionals, and strengthen DOD training for better detection of PTSD

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

Prevent TRICARE and veterans health care fee increases proposed by President Bush.



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 Bush budget in both years.

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 177 day average wait for veterans to access earned benefits by adding 7,100 new claims processors.

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