



Republican Accomplishments of the 111th Congress

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

✓ **Included Veterans in Stimulus Package:**

- In late December 2008, Ranking Member Steve Buyer of Indiana urged House leaders and President-elect Obama to include over \$2 billion for veterans in the economic stimulus package.
- Only after pressure was brought by him and other members was \$1.4 billion for veterans added to the stimulus package including \$1 billion for VA hospital improvements and \$50 million for National Cemeteries.

✓ **Protected Veterans from Obamacare:**

- Republicans exposed serious flaws in the healthcare reform bill that could have harmed veterans had they not been addressed. They also blocked provisions that would have limited veterans' healthcare choices and could have placed a 2.5% punitive tax on veterans and their families.

✓ **Enacted Bipartisan Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2009:**

- Authorized more than \$3.6 billion for veterans' programs, including support and assistance for caregivers, increased access to care, better outreach, and support for women veterans, rural veterans, and homeless veterans. It also includes enhancements to the provision of mental health care and readjustment counseling for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Among the provisions included in the bill was *The Disabled Veterans Home Improvement and Structural Alteration Grant Increase Act of 2009*, which increased grants for disabled veterans to improve home access.

✓ **Enacted The Bipartisan Veterans Benefit Act of 2010:**

- Created a new veterans energy related employment program;
- Increased protections for deployed servicemembers under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act in regard to cell phone contracts;
- Provided numerous VA life insurance program improvements;
- Increased the plot and burial allowances for deceased veterans;
- Authorized aid and attendance benefits for veterans with traumatic brain injury;
- Authorized job skills training for the homeless women veterans and homeless veterans with children grant program;
- Expanded eligibility for adaptive auto grants to disabled veterans and servicemembers with severe burn injuries;

- Authorized funding for construction of medical facilities or community outpatient clinics in New Orleans, Louisiana, Long Beach, California, Billings, Montana, San Diego, California, Boston, Massachusetts, San Francisco, California, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

✓ **Assisted Parents of Deceased Servicemembers:**

- Passed legislation to provide parents of deceased servicemembers, commonly referred to as Gold Star Parents, expanded access to state veterans' homes. This legislation is awaiting signature by the President.

✓ **Amended the MilCon/VA Appropriations Bill to Ensure Funding for Paralympics, Renewable Energy, and Vocational Rehabilitation:**

- Secured \$10 million for the VA-US Paralympic Adaptive Sports Grant Program to establish partnerships with local adaptive sports programs to give wounded warriors rehabilitative therapy.
- Provided \$162.7 million to fund renewable energy projects at VA medical facility campuses.
- Secured \$10 million to fund one hundred additional Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program counselors to assist disabled veterans in finding meaningful employment and living as independently as possible.

✓ **House Passed Additional Benefit Improvements for Veterans (H.R. 5360, as amended and H.R. 6132) which would:**

- Re-authorize the VA Small Business Loan Guarantee program to provide loan guarantees to veterans owned small businesses;
- Authorize \$15 million fund a program to encourage veterans to teach at primary and secondary schools in rural areas. The veterans would receive a stipend of \$500 per month for up to 24 months;
- Create a new internship program at the VR&E service for new graduates of the program to assist in rehabbing other veterans;
- Double the monthly pension for Medal of Honor Recipients;
- Require VA to contract with veteran owned small businesses over other set aside small business groups;
- Expand the work study program to include work in Congressional offices;
- Provide funding for grants to assist in the creation of new adaptive technologies;
- Provide reimbursement of up to \$2,000 a month for childcare for VR&E participants who are single parents and don't have the money to provide childcare;
- Increase the Vocational Rehab stipend by 7%;
- Increase the payments for the Specialty Adaptive Housing Grant Program;
- Include the WARMER Act to allow VA to back loans to veterans to increase the energy efficiency of their home;

✓ Rejected Third Party Collections Proposal:

- Republicans and veterans forced the Obama Administration to drop a plan to bill veterans' health insurance companies for their combat injuries. They adamantly opposed shifting the responsibility of paying for treatment of service-related disabilities from the Federal government to private insurance.

✓ Initiated Investigations on Contractor Performance and Patient Safety:

- Requested IG investigation of a VA contractor with findings that led to faster and more accurate automated processing of veterans' 9/11 GI Bill claims.
- Demanded on VA-wide review of patient safety issues involving reusable medical equipment and nuclear medicine procedures that potentially exposed thousands of veterans to life-threatening diseases, injury or death. Programs and procedures are being revamped as a result.

✓ Introduced Innovative Legislation to Help Veterans and their Survivors:

- Noble Warrior Initiative – Would create comprehensive sustainable energy practices for veterans' hospitals.
- The Surviving Spouses Equity Act – Would increase payments to survivors by 10% and eliminate the SBP/DIC offset also known as the "widow tax."
- VA Acquisition Bill – Would streamline and centralize VA purchasing of goods and services, saving VA hundreds of millions of dollars for reinvestment in veterans' health care.
- The Severely Injured Veterans Improvement Act of 2009 – Would improve disability compensation for the most severely disabled veterans by 50%, authorize aid and attendance for veterans with severe traumatic brain injury, and protect the pensions of disabled veterans who are elderly and poor.
- Promoting Jobs for Veterans Act – Would assist veteran owned small businesses by making it easier for them to contract with the Federal government and promote long-term employment for veterans by improving training and rehabilitation programs at VA and the Department of Labor.
- Heroes at Home Act – Would increase the long-term care options for veterans by allowing VA to enter into a contract with a certified adult foster home to pay for the long-term care of veterans already eligible for VA-paid nursing home care.
- Extension of Health Care Eligibility for Veterans who served at Qarmat Ali Act – Would allow a veteran who served in Qarmat Ali, Iraq to enroll in the VA healthcare system if they have been notified of possible exposure to a toxic substance but whose eligibility for VA healthcare as a result of service in combat has expired.
- Veterans Second Amendment Protection Act – Would protect veterans' second amendment rights by prohibiting VA from reporting "mentally incompetent" veterans to the any Federal Agency without due process;