

closures to returning servicemembers and their families.

- Provides specially adaptive housing to active duty servicemembers with severe burns and other service-connected disabilities.
- Increases specially adaptive housing benefits for disabled veterans.
- Temporarily increases maximum home loan guaranty for mortgages backed by VA up to 125% of the median price for a single-family home.

P.L. 110-252, Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act / VFW GI Bill for the 21st Century

- Expands veterans' educational benefits for Post 9/11 veterans by covering full tuition at the highest in-state tuition rate and includes books, fees, and a cost-of-living stipend.
- Eliminates the \$1200 buy-in fee.
- Extends use of benefit from 10 to 15 years after discharge or release from active duty and allows individuals under the current Montgomery GI Bill to elect to participate in the post-9/11 educational assistance program with respect to any unused benefit.
- Allows certain reenlisting servicemembers to transfer their educational benefit to their spouse and/or children.
- Fixes inequities in educational benefits being provided to Guard and Reservists.
- Creates the "Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program," a dollar-for-dollar government matching program with private universities whose tuitions are above GI Bill rates to encourage more students and colleges to use the new GI Bill.

P.L. 110-181, FY 2008 National Defense Authorization Act

- Adopted elements of the Wounded Warriors Act, and the Dole-Shalala

Commission recommendations to include creating a Wounded Warrior Resource Center; mandating initiatives and programs for improving the disability evaluation system; and requiring a comprehensive policy to address Traumatic Brain Injuries and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

- Authorizes a 3.5% across-the-board pay raise for all servicemembers, and increases monthly hardship duty pay to a maximum of \$1,500.
- Prohibits increases in both TRICARE and pharmacy user fees, preventing over \$1.86 billion in healthcare costs from being passed on to servicemembers, retirees and their families.
- Authorizes \$2.9 billion for military family housing.
- Expands Combat Related Special Compensation to include Chapter 61 disability retired servicemembers with fewer than 20 years service.
- Authorizes disabled retirees, who are considered 100% disabled by virtue of being unemployable, to receive full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and disability compensation effective Jan. 1, 2007.
- Allows Reserve Component members to use their educational benefits for 10 years after separation.
- Allows members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are out of uniform to render the military salute during the hoisting, lowering, or passing of the flag.
- Reduces the age at which reservists can draw retired pay by three months for every 90 days of active duty service in support of a contingency operation.
- Improves outreach to members of the National Guard and Reserves, in response to the major role these forces are carrying out in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

P.L. 110-417, FY 2009 National Defense Authorization Act

- Authorizes a 3.9% across-the-board pay raise and extends many special pay and bonuses for

a wide-variety of servicemembers.

- Mandates that any servicemember who is retired or separated for a combat-related disability or a survivor of a member who dies on active duty is not required to repay any bonus or other benefit.
- Prohibits increased premiums, co-pays and retail pharmacy fees for Tricare users.
- Authorizes \$3.2 billion for quality military housing.
- Establishes a task force on the prevention of suicide by members of the Armed Forces.
- Extends the current wounded warrior senior oversight committee through 2009.
- Requires DOD to recalculate the monthly premiums being charged to Tricare Reserve Select beneficiaries.
- Provides tuition assistance and training opportunities for military spouses seeking degrees and careers that are portable as they move to other duty locations.
- Applies the current SBP-DIC phased-in annuity to surviving spouses of members who die on active duty.
- Allows veterans and servicemembers not in uniform to render a hand salute during playing of the national anthem.

VA Appropriations/Funding

Congress passed record high funding levels for Department of Veterans Affairs for Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009.

FY 2008 total funding was \$43.1 billion and for FY 2009 Congress' passed on-time appropriations - the first time in over 10 years - which gave VA \$47.6 billion in funding.



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You Made a Difference

Successfully Passed
Veterans Legislation
110th Congress, 2008



Veterans moved to the forefront this past year and played a key role in the election process. Candidates saw the difference that veterans make and heard our powerful voice speak out on behalf of those who have admirably served this country.

Your many phone calls, e-mails, visits, faxes and letters paid off. Because of your efforts, qualifying veterans will now receive full in-state tuition thanks to the passing of the *Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act*, better known as the GI Bill for the 21st Century.

Despite our successes, our fight has not

ended. We are in a new Congress with the new administration with many new faces. We must educate all our legislators on VFW Priority Goal issues and let them know that veterans are a powerful and influential voice across the country. Together we can make sure that Congress hears us and protects the rights of and provides for all those who served—yesterday, today and into the future.

With your continued hard work, we can be just as successful in the future.

Veterans Legislation Passed by 110th Congress

VA Benefits & Compensation

P.L. 110-111, Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2007

- Increases the rates of disability compensation, clothing allowance and DIC by 2.3%

P.L. 110-324, Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2008

- Increases the rates of disability compensation, clothing allowance and DIC by 5.8%

P.L. 110-389, Veterans Benefits Improvements Act of 2008

- Establishes an Office of Survivors Assistance within VA.
- Allows for temporary disability ratings for certain veterans.
- Requires VA to report on its efforts in addressing causes for variances in compensation payments for service-connected veterans.
- Allows substitute claimants to continue claim upon death of a veteran seeking compensation.
- Requires an independent assessment of VA's claims adjudication quality assurance program.

- Reforms the complaint process under the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA).
- Allows for waiver of the 24-month limitation on program of independent living services and assistance for veterans with severe disabilities incurred in post-9/11 Global operations.
- Increases cap on the number of veterans eligible to participate in independent living programs.
- Enhances measures to assist and encourage veterans in completing vocational rehabilitation.
- Increases Servicemembers Group Life Insurance coverage.
- Extends certain veterans home loan guaranty programs.
- Increases maximum guaranty amount of refinanced home loans by veterans.
- Adds osteoporosis to list of presumptive disabilities for certain former prisoners of war.

VA Healthcare

P.L. 110-110, Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act

- Directs VA to develop and carry out a comprehensive program designed

- to reduce the number of suicides among veterans. Requires the program to include: (1) training for staff and contractors at VA; (2) mental health assessments of veterans; (3) designation of a suicide prevention counselor at each medical facility; (4) research on best practices for suicide prevention; (5) mental health care for veterans who have experienced sexual trauma while in military service; (6) 24-hour veterans' mental health care availability; (7) a toll-free hotline; and (8) outreach and education for veterans and their families.
- Authorizes the Secretary to develop a peer support counseling program.

P.L. 110-157, Dr. James Allen Veteran Vision Equity Act

- Compensates veterans for impairment of vision involving both eyes due to a service-connected and non service-connected disability. Defines such impairment as a visual acuity of 20/200 or less or of a peripheral field of 20 degrees or less.
- Allows VA to use the National Directory of New Hires for income verification purposes to determine eligibility for certain veteran benefits and services.
- Extends, through June 30, 2009, VA authority to provide an educational allowance to persons performing qualifying work-study activities.
- Authorizes the Secretary, in lieu of furnishing a headstone or marker, to furnish a bronze representation of the letter "V" to be attached to a headstone or marker at private cemeteries.

P.L. 110-387, Veterans Mental Health and Other Care Improvement Act

- Provides mental health care services, including counseling for families of veterans.
- Provides reimbursement to some veterans for cost of emergency treatment received at non-VA facilities.
- Mandates VA to centralize third-party billing functions at consolidated centers.
- Requires critical research into PTSD and substance-use disorders.

- Improves access to PTSD treatment.
- Directs VA to establish at least six national centers of excellence for Epilepsy research, education and clinical care services for veterans.
- Requires VA to ensure that its domiciliary care programs are adequate in meeting the needs of women veterans.
- Increases beneficiary mileage reimbursement rates for travel to VA facilities to 41 cents.
- Expands health care benefits for children of Vietnam and Korean war veterans born with spina bifida.
- Authorizes pilot program to permit highly rural veterans enrolled in VA to receive covered health care at a non-VA health provider.

Veterans Employment

P.L. 110-186, Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2008

- Expands Small Business Administration programs for veterans and military reservists.
- Reauthorizes SBA programs for veterans and reservists for two years and permits the government to spend up to \$4.4 million on Veterans Business Outreach Centers.
- Allows the SBA to offer loans of up to \$50,000 without collateral, and lengthens the time available to reservists to apply for disaster loans and raises the maximum loan amount.

Military Quality of Life P.L. 110-289, Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008

- Prohibits foreclosure on property owned by servicemembers for nine months following deployment.
- Enhances protections for servicemembers regarding mortgages and foreclosures.
- Offers counseling on mortgage fore-