

Veterans Day: A time to recognize those who have bravely served our nation -- November 2007

Veterans

Day is a time to show our gratitude to the heroes of our great nation who have made extremely difficult sacrifices in order to protect the rights and freedoms that we hold dear. This week, it is important that we acknowledge those brave men and women who have served throughout the world in the decisive conflicts of the 20th century. It is also vital that we remember today's soldiers, who time and again have stepped forward to answer the call of duty. Delawareans are particularly familiar with the sacrifices of military personnel as the percentage of armed forces volunteers in our state is well above the national average. Veterans in Delaware and across the nation rightfully deserve our highest respect and appreciation for their incomparable service.

With over

80,000 veterans living in Delaware, it is extremely important that we provide our soldiers with the benefits and assistance they have earned. For this reason, I voted for the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act when it was passed by the House of Representatives earlier this year. I also proudly cosponsored legislation known as the Fairness in Veterans Disability Benefits Act. These two bills will aid wounded soldiers returning home by requiring the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire more employees to assist veterans seeking service-connected claims. This much-needed legislation would also create a new system so that the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs may more efficiently share information about soldiers' medical records, while taking steps to ensure veterans begin receiving their compensation in a timelier manner.

Just this month, I also joined my colleagues in the House of Representatives by passing several key pieces of legislation in support of our veterans and recognizing their efforts on behalf of our country. This essential legislation would help preserve veterans' history, extend associate memberships to spouses for the Order of the Purple Heart, streamline the standards for awarding disability compensation to veterans, and recognize nearly 200,000 Native American veterans across the nation. In addition, Congress recently approved a new spending bill that will provide a 3.5 percent pay increase for military personnel and boost the basic housing allowance to ensure that troops have no out-of-pocket living costs. This spending bill would also increase military support funds by \$2.6 billion to help children and families managing the difficult challenges of deployments.

Earlier this year I toured the Veterans Medical Center in Elsmere where I was particularly impressed by the commitment of the staff and the level of care Delaware's veterans are able to obtain. Facilities like this strive to provide the best care possible to our veterans, and with more new soldiers returning home from areas of conflict abroad, it is imperative that we continue to improve our ability to provide the effective care and services that each of these individuals has earned.

So this week, as we celebrate our nation's heroes and honor those who have decided to wear the uniform, let us also remember some of the people who work behind the scenes, including the

thousands of military families and veterans healthcare professionals, who have committed themselves to supporting our nation's heroes each and every day. Working together, I believe we can all help to make our nation stronger as we endeavor to live up to the tremendous example set by our country's veterans.