

REPUBLICANS BREAK THEIR PROMISES TO THE MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM IN ARKANSAS

This weekend, families everywhere will celebrate the anniversary of America's independence. As we celebrate, our communities will thank the thousands of brave men and women in uniform, who exemplify the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American people to securing democracy throughout the world. But back in Washington DC, Republicans have quietly tried to cut corners when it comes to the needs of America's veterans and the courageous men and women in the military. Democrats want to ensure that the men and women fighting for our freedom overseas do not have to fight the government for the benefits they earned when they return home.

MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM FROM ARKANSAS NEED OUR SUPPORT

Arkansas has 1,744 men and women fighting overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan and 268,352 veterans.

Arkansas has 658 members of the National Guard and Reserves fighting overseas in Iraq, as well as 1,086 from the active duty military. [DOD Legal Residence/ Home of Record for Service Members Deployed, 4/05; VA 10/04]

Veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserves face difficulties accessing health care. Over 500,000 veterans nationwide are locked out of the VA health care system altogether, including 9,818 in Arkansas, because of arbitrary requirements put into place by the Bush Administration. And about 20 percent of all reservists do not have health insurance at all – approximately 2,649 in Arkansas. [68 Fed Reg 2670, 2671 1/17/03; VHA Policy & Forecasting 2/24/03, Projected to FY2005; Based on NGA, 4/25/05 and GAO, 9/02]

Disabled veterans in Arkansas face delays, barriers to getting benefits they earned. More than 4,914 veterans in Arkansas are still subject to the disabled veterans' tax, which forces veterans to sacrifice one dollar of their pension for every dollar they receive in disability benefits. In addition, there is a huge backlog of almost 500,000 compensation and pension claims, including those from veterans of the current war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Disabled veterans in Arkansas are still waiting approximately 179 days for their disability assessment. [Democratic Staff, House Government Reform Committee / Democratic Leader's Office, 6/05; Waiting Times for VA Disability Assessments, 7/04]

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION BROKE THEIR PROMISE TO OUR TROOPS

Bush Opposed Better Healthcare For Troops And Veterans, Underfunded Veterans Health Care by \$3.7 Billion Over Two Years. OMB Director Josh Bolten opposed the allocation of "an additional \$1.3 billion for VA medical care and the provision that would expand benefits under the TRICARE Program." [Foxnews.com, 10/21/03; BVA legislative bulletin; CQ, 10/20/03; Washington Post, 6/24/05; AP 6/28/05]

Bush Proposed New \$250 User Fees and Double Prescription Drug Co-Payments For Veterans. At least 200,000 veterans would be driven out of the system entirely, including 14,937 in Arkansas, and it would cost Arkansas veterans remaining in the system more than \$6,838,603 over five years. [New York Times, 2/7/05; House Government Reform Committee Democratic Staff 6/05; Budget of the US Government, 2/05]

Bush Budget Retains Disabled Veterans' Tax, Does Not Do Enough For Troops And Families. The Bush 2006 budget includes no targeted pay raises for senior noncommissioned officers, petty officers and warrant officers; has no money to fund the 2006 costs of proposed increases in death benefits; and would make no further progress in eliminating the so-called disabled veterans' tax. [Army Times, 2/21/05]

DEMOCRATS ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR TROOPS AND VETERANS

Democrats are working to improve health care and other benefits for our men and women in uniform. Democrats fought for increases in funding for the VA health care system, want to end the disabled veterans' tax, are working to expand health care through TRICARE for every member of the National Guard and Reserves, and have a new GI Bill of Rights to improve education benefits for veterans. [House and Senate Democratic Leadership, 6/05]

