

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

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. And we will honor our veterans, who have asked so little and sacrificed so much for our country. 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. They have tried to cut health care benefits for our veterans, refused to expand health care for men and women in the National Guard and Reserves, and rejected measures to keep them safe when they are fighting overseas. In fact, just this week the Administration admitted that they had underfunded veterans' health care by \$3.7 billion over the next two years. 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 UTAH NEED OUR SUPPORT

Utah has 1,397 men and women fighting overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan and 151,129 veterans. Utah has 738 members of the National Guard and Reserves fighting overseas in Iraq, as well as 659 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 2,878 in Utah because of arbitrary enrollment requirements put into place by the Bush Administration. Just this week the Administration admitted that they had underfunded veterans' health care by \$3.7 billion over the next two years. And about 20 percent of all reservists do not have health insurance at all – approximately 1,907 in Utah, leaving them and their families without coverage when they leave active duty. [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; Washington Post, 6/24/05; AP 6/28/05]

Disabled veterans in Utah face delays, barriers to getting benefits they earned. More than 2,617 veterans in Utah 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 Utah are still waiting approximately 97 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]

REPUBLICANS HAVE FAILED OUR MILITARY AND VETERANS

Senators Hatch and Bennett Voted Against Increased Funding for Humvee Armor For Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Senators Hatch and Bennett voted against an additional \$213 million for armored Humvee production remains at its maximum level through the fiscal year. [Roll Call #108, SA 520 4/21/05]

Senators Bennett and Hatch Voted Against Improving Health Care for Veterans. Senators Bennett and Hatch voted against making a portion of VA funding mandatory or automatic, like other health related programs. Bennett and Hatch also repeatedly voted against efforts to increase overall funding for veterans' medical care by almost \$2 billion. Just this week Republicans admitted that they had underfunded veterans' health care by \$3.7 billion over the next two years. [#145 S 2400, 6/23/04; #89 and #90, HR 1268, 4/12/05; #40, SCR 95, 3/10/04; Washington Post 6/24/05; AP 6/28/05]

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.” Just this week the Administration admitted that they had underfunded veterans’ health care by \$3.7 billion over the next two years. [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. Bush’s 2006 budget would more than double the co-payment charged to veterans for prescription drugs and would require some to pay a new user fee of \$250 a year for their health care. It would also increase the co-payment for a month’s supply of a prescription drug to \$15, from the current \$7. At least 200,000 veterans would be driven out of the system entirely, including 6,468 in Utah, and it would cost Utah veterans remaining in the system more than \$1,730,079 over five years. [New York Times, 2/7/05; Office of Democratic Leader Pelosi; 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, which requires military retirees to forfeit a dollar of retired pay for every dollar they receive in veterans’ disability compensation. [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]

