

Eighth District Veterans Report

from U.S. Representative Bill Posey

Dear Friend,

Several weeks ago on June 6th we commemorated the 70th Anniversary of the Allied Invasion of Normandy. On that day 70 years ago American soldiers, alongside their allies, led the charge to defend our freedoms and liberate Europe and the rest of the world from a great tyranny.

As we celebrate our independence and reflect on the sacrifices made by those who signed the Declaration of Independence, let us also remember the brave men and women who have stood firm, from that day until now, defending our nation both here and abroad. We owe each of them, and their families, a tremendous debt of gratitude for their courage in answering the call to serve and protect our freedom.

It is critically important that we do all we can to keep the promises made to our nation's veterans. The recent investigations of the Department of Veteran Affairs have revealed unthinkable disregard for this duty. We as a nation have an obligation, indeed a duty, to stand up for our veterans, to put an end to the scandal, and to hold every wrongdoer fully accountable. These are earned benefits, and I will do all within my power to see that they are provided. We must also ensure that those at the VA who abused the trust placed in them to meet our veterans' needs are held responsible.

There's nothing more important than making good on the promises made to our nation's veterans, and those serving in uniform today must know that the promises that were made WILL be kept.

To our nation's veterans: thank you for your service. You have gone beyond the call of duty, and our nation must do the same for you.

Sincerely,

Bill



Rep. Posey meets with local veterans participating in a recent Honor Flight to Washington, DC.

“There’s nothing more important than making good on the promises made to our nation’s veterans...”

-Rep. Bill Posey

STRENGTHENING VETERANS BENEFITS PROGRAMS

- ✓ **Timely Access to Veterans Medical Care:** Legislation requiring the VA to schedule a medical appointment within 30 days of a veteran seeking an appointment (*Cosponsor H.R. 241*)
- ✓ **Supporting Veterans' COLA:** Providing annual veterans cost-of-living adjustments (*Public Law 113-52*)
- ✓ **Meeting the Needs of Surviving Spouses:** Ending the practice of reducing Survivor Benefit Program benefits by amount received in Dependence and Indemnity Compensation (*Cosponsored H.R. 32*)
- ✓ **Protecting TRICARE Benefits:** Supported the inclusion of provisions in the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act again rejecting the TRICARE fee increases proposed by the Department of Defense and the Administration
- ✓ **VA ID Card:** Cosponsored legislation enabling all veterans to obtain ID cards from the Department of Veterans Affairs (*Cosponsored H.R. 1598*)
- ✓ **Services for Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans:** Granting presumptive coverage for Agent Orange if serving within 12 miles offshore in Vietnam (*Cosponsored H.R. 543*)
- ✓ **Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act:** Ensuring immediate VA healthcare to veterans and their family members stationed at Camp Lejeune who have been diagnosed with a disease related to the water contamination that occurred between 1957 and 1987 (*Voted for Public Law 112-154*)

HELPING VETERANS TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE

- ✓ **Improving Veterans Education Benefits:** *Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010* updated GI Benefits and made sure that these earned benefits were more fully available to the veterans who had earned them (*Public Law 111-223*)
- ✓ **Assisting Veterans Transitioning from Military Jobs to Civilian Jobs:** Voted for passage of The Veterans Skills to Jobs Act requiring Federal Agencies to accept military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for federal licenses (*Public Law 112-147*)
- ✓ **Curbing Veterans Unemployment:** Voted to establish the VetStar Award for businesses that excel in providing gainful employment for veterans (*H.R. 802/Public Law 112-147*)
- ✓ **Strengthening Mental Health Screening and Suicide Prevention:** Helped advance suicide prevention legislation and funding and ensure greater access to mental health screening and services
- ✓ **Veterans Employment:** Selected by U.S. House of Representatives to participate in the Wounded Warrior employee program to hire a 9/11 wounded warrior



Rep. Posey meets with veterans to discuss issues before Congress.

House Approves Posey Legislation to Support Deployed Troops

When our soldiers are deployed to defend our nation, many patriotic Americans want to do what they can to help, put together care packages and show their support for our brave men and women in uniform. Rep. Posey, working with a Brevard veterans group, introduced the Deployed Troops Support Act (H.R. 1756) which allows the Department of Defense (DOD) to utilize space available to transport, at no cost, goods supplied by nonprofit organizations to members of the Armed Forces serving overseas. The bill was approved as an amendment to this year's National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4435).

Posey's Bill to Recognize the Borinqueneers Signed into Law

Last month the House and Senate passed H.R. 1726, a bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. Posey to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment known as the Borinqueneers. The bill was signed into law by the President on June 10th in a ceremony at the White House.

The 65th Infantry Regiment was created by Congress in 1898 as an all-Puerto Rican segregated unit and was called upon to serve our nation in World War I, World War II and the Korean War, where they fought some of the fiercest battles to date and became known as the Borinqueneers. During the now-famous Battle of Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War, the Borinqueneers fought alongside the First Marine Division.

AGENDA FOR VETERANS



Select Committee Created to Investigate Benghazi

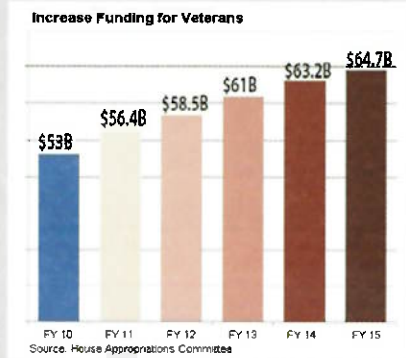
After 20 months of searching for answers, the families of four brave Americans serving in Benghazi, Libya, have yet to have their most basic questions answered about what happened to their loved ones on September 11, 2012 – the 11th anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

On April 29th it came to light through a Freedom of Information Act request from a government watchdog group that the Administration withheld key documents from Congress in violation of Congressional subpoenas. This failure to comply with the Congressional subpoena obstructed the investigations into what exactly happened in Benghazi. The bipartisan Select Committee will now help us uncover the following:

- ✓ **Why was backup not sent?** Despite frantic requests for assistance from State Department officials on the ground in Libya, authorization for help from nearby military forces and CIA officers were all rejected by those higher up.
- ✓ **Why did the Administration continue to claim that the attack resulted from a spontaneous protest over an obscure video that got out of hand?** According to the bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee report on Benghazi both the CIA and FBI reviewed the security footage from the consulate and found there was no protest.
- ✓ **The Administration removed all references to Al-Qaeda, terrorism, and CIA warnings. Why?**

“My hope is this Select Committee will shed light on what happened in Benghazi so we can better protect Americans serving overseas – and so these families can have the truth.”

-Rep. Bill Posey



House VA Budget Boosts Veterans Funding, Aims to End Claims Backlog

Compared to last year's budget, this year's House-passed VA budget (H.R. 4486) increases funding for veterans programs by 7% or \$10 billion and puts the focus on providing better services at VA facilities. VA medical services are funded at an increased level of \$45 billion, which will enable six million additional patients to be treated within the VA next year. Our bill also directs resources to further support suicide prevention, mental health, traumatic brain injury, homeless veteran programs and rural health initiatives.

The VA's failure to address the claims backlog that has forced many veterans to wait nine months or more for claims to be processed is completely unacceptable. It's time to move veterans care into the 21st century by using current technology to speed up the process so veterans can get better care and faster service. That's why Rep. Posey supported the House-passed VA budget, which will end the backlog by:

- ✓ Modernizing the VA electronic health records system and investing in a paperless claims system to enable the VA to end the disability claims backlog by 2015.
- ✓ Enhancing digital health record scanning and centralizing the mail will enable the VA to process claims in a more-timely manner.
- ✓ Ensuring better care by facilitating timely and accurate exchange of medical data between the VA, DOD and the private sector.
- ✓ Holding the VA and DOD accountable for meeting specific timelines.

Posey's Personal Accountability Checklist

In addition to holding the VA accountable, Rep. Posey believes that he should lead by example. Here's how he's doing it:

- ✓ Blocking Congressional pay raise for 2010-2014
- ✓ Returned pay raise every year (raise was approved before coming to Congress in 2009)
- ✓ Returned full pay for service during the government shutdown
- ✓ **No special exemptions** – Enrolled in an Obamacare Exchange (same as staff)
- ✓ Introduced legislation requiring 72 hours for the public and Congress to review bills before a House floor vote can take place (Adopted as House Rule Reform)
- ✓ Cosponsored and voted for the *STOCK Act* to ensure that

- Members of Congress don't trade stock based on insider information (S. 2038)
- ✓ Cut his own office budget by \$650,000 over the past 5 years and cut overall Congressional budget by 20% over the past three years
- ✓ Stopping Washington's revolving door by banning Members of Congress from lobbying for 5 years after leaving office (Introduced H.R. 440)
- ✓ Voted to reduce Congressional pensions (H.R. 3630)
- ✓ Rejects taxpayer-funded or lobbyist-funded overseas trips

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It is provided as a service to 8th Congressional District constituents.

Fixing Problems at the VA, Holding the VA Accountable!

The VA Inspector General (IG) released a report to Congress on May 28th, finding deception, malfeasance, incompetence and outright abuse of our veterans at some of our nation's VA facilities. This is not only a disgraceful way to treat those who have defended our nation on the front line of freedom, but the IG said in some instances it may warrant criminal referrals.

I am fighting for short-term and long-term measures that will address this issue so that our veterans will have assurance that their needs will be met and our nation will fulfill its promises. Several of the steps I have taken to address this issue:

- ✓ **Firing Bad VA Managers** – Cosponsored and voted for legislation (H.R. 4031) to allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to remove or demote bad employees
- ✓ **Guaranteed Timely Access to Medical Care** – Voted for legislation allowing veterans – over the next two years – to seek care in a non-VA facility if the wait for care exceeds reasonable timeframes so that veterans do not suffer for lack of proper medical care (H.R. 4810)



Rep. Posey attends a recent press conference in the Capitol calling on the Administration to hold the VA accountable for mistreatment of veterans.

- ✓ **Suspend Bonus Payments for Two Years Until VA Problems are Fixed** – Supported legislation to stop the practice of giving bonuses to VA employees who do a poor job serving our veterans
- ✓ **Enhancing Medical Care Within the VA** – H.R. 4810 directs the VA to improve veterans' medical care through enhanced contracting within the VA
- ✓ **Augmenting VA Care to Address Backlog** – Requires VA oversight to ensure that, when non-VA care is accessed, full treatment is provided and such care is provided by quality providers

VA ACCOUNTABILITY:

- **Reporting** – Demands that the VA provide timely reports on care and backlog improvements (H.R. 4810)
- **Oversight** – H.R. 2072 passed the House and requires VA managers to fix the VA under strict oversight by the Inspector General
- **Quality of Care** – H.R. 4810 requires the VA to contract with an independent entity to assess the quality of the medical care provided to veterans and the VA is required to address any deficiencies in a timely manner

Rep. Posey and His Staff are Here to Serve Veterans



Rob Medina and Cheryl Moore (pictured at left) serve on Rep. Posey's staff and have nearly 20 years combined experience in helping veterans with casework needs. Rob and Cheryl are well-versed in veterans' issues personally and professionally. Rob Medina is a U.S. Marine,

no longer on active duty, and Cheryl Moore grew up a Navy dependent, the daughter of a WWII and Korean War veteran, and she is the mother of a U.S. Airman. They are here to help veterans navigate federal agencies, to assist in obtaining medals and securing Defense Dept. records, and to help veterans address concerns with the VA.

"I am so grateful to you for your assistance in resolving the matter of my pension with the VA. I can now retire in my home rather than going into a facility for care."
– Jean, Melbourne

"Words are abundant when being grateful for a 'mission completed', but in this instance I send a simple, but very sincere, thank you. The expediting request I sent you regarding my husband's Aid & Attendance claim was granted far faster than we imagined." – Carol, Viera

"I want to thank you for your letter and the awards. My great grandchildren will appreciate knowing about the ten medals I received for my service during World War II and the Korean War." – Louis, Vero Beach