

Eighth District Veterans Report

from U.S. Representative Bill Posey

Dear Friend,

As we commemorate Independence Day, let us also take time to remember our brave men and women in uniform, and their families, who have made great personal sacrifices to defend our freedoms. Without their dedication it would not be possible to hold on to our freedoms throughout the years.

We owe our nation's military veterans a great debt of gratitude, and we, as a nation, have an obligation to keep the promises made to our men and women in uniform. It's the responsibility of this country to make sure that our veterans are cared for while actively serving and in their retirement. Honoring America's commitment to our veterans and supporting our troops must be a top priority.

If you know of any veteran in our community who is having trouble with VA services, please reach out to them and encourage them to contact my office in Brevard County at 321-632-1776 or Indian River County 772-226-1701. In fact, please call us if you are having trouble with any federal agency – the VA, the Social Security Administration, Medicare or even the IRS. My staff and I are here to serve you.



Rep. Posey discusses military issues at a recent memorial dedication at Patrick Air Force Base.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill".

Bill Posey

"Washington should do all it can to ensure that veterans get the quality care and customer experience they deserve." – Rep. Bill Posey

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POSEY'S LEGISLATIVE A

MOVING IDEAS FORWARD - VETERANS LEGISLATIVE ACTION

- ✓ **VA ID Card** – Cosponsored legislation signed into law enabling veterans to obtain identification cards from the Department of Veterans Affairs. (*Public Law 114-31*)
- ✓ **Services for Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans** – Granting presumptive coverage for Agent Orange if serving within 12 miles offshore in Vietnam. (*Cosponsored H.R. 299*)
- ✓ **Meeting the Needs of Surviving Spouses** – Ending the practice of reducing Survivor Benefit Program benefits by the amount received in Dependence and Indemnity Compensation. (*Cosponsored H.R. 846*)
- ✓ **Helping Homeless Veterans Get Back on Their Feet** – Supported the *Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs Reauthorization Act* (H.R. 474). This legislation has two goals: to assist veterans in achieving meaningful employment and to help fight homelessness among our nation's veterans.
- ✓ **Increasing Affordable Housing Options for Veterans** – Supported the *Vulnerable Veterans Housing Reform Act* (H.R. 1816), which makes important changes to exclude payments made by the VA to veterans' health-care providers from counting toward the veterans' gross income for purposes of determining eligibility for Section 8 voucher and public housing programs.
- ✓ **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*)
- ✓ **Increasing Veteran Employment Opportunities** – Supported H.R. 1382, which gives preference to government contractors who employ veterans on a full-time basis and disqualifies contractors who misrepresent their veteran status.
- ✓ **Veterans Employment** – Selected by U.S. House of Representatives to participate in the Wounded Warrior employee program to hire a post-9/11 wounded warrior.
- ✓ **Service Dogs** – Cosponsored the *PAWS (Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers) Act* to create a pilot program that would provide service dogs to select veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- ✓ **Increasing Accountability at the VA** – Supported H.R. 1259, the *VA Accountability First Act*, which gives the VA Secretary increased flexibility to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee for performance issues or misconduct.
- ✓ **Protecting Veterans' Second Amendment Rights** – Supported H.R. 1181, the *Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act*, to ensure that no veteran who utilizes a fiduciary will lose their Second Amendment rights without due process.



Rep. Posey discusses veterans issues at an event at Cape Canaveral National Cemetery.

Community Remembers Local Veteran with Monument

In March, Families of the Shield, Inc. honored the life and sacrifices of Command Sergeant Major William Francis Ryan (USA, Retired) by raising the United States flag over a Big Red One Statue at Eddie's Sunrise Diner in Melbourne. His story was read into the Congressional Record, and, at Rep. Posey's request, the United States Flag was flown over our Capitol Building to further honor Command Sergeant Major Ryan who was a member of the 1st Inf. Div.'s 16th Infantry Regiment during D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. During his 30-plus years of service he also volunteered for numerous tours of duty in Korea and Vietnam. Rep. Posey's office had previously honored Command Sergeant Major Ryan with a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for his service to our nation, and worked with Families of the Shield, Inc. to coordinate the monument and dedication.



Read more about my record on other impor

AGENDA FOR VETERANS

House Passes Legislation to Improve the VA Experience

The need for strong leadership at the VA is critical. We were shocked and outraged to learn that more than 200 veterans have died while waiting for medical care at the VA hospital in Phoenix, three years after the facility was at the center of a scandal in which patient records were altered to hide the length of their waiting period. **Washington should do all it can to ensure that veterans get the quality care and customer experience they deserve.**

Accountability at the VA: The VA can never truly serve veterans until it ensures that only the most qualified and ethical employees advance and retain VA positions. That's why with Rep. Posey's support, the House passed H.R. 1259, the *VA Accountability First Act of 2017*, which provides the VA Secretary increased flexibility to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee, including Senior Executive Service employees, for performance issues or misconduct. This legislation complements recent executive action taken by President Trump to establish an accountability and whistleblower protection office within the VA.

Helping the VA Recruit and Retain Qualified Employees: A recent federal agency study ranked the VA second to last in effective leadership and dead last in pay, further creating hiring inefficiencies.

To attract highly qualified employees, the House passed H.R. 1367, which establishes a recruiting database to make potential candidates aware of positions at the VA and create opportunities for career training and advancement for current VA employees through fellowship positions and a promotional track for technical experts.

Extending Veterans Choice: For veterans who are not receiving the quality care they need and deserve at the local VA, Congress created a temporary program called Veterans Choice to allow veterans to see private doctors and specialists outside the VA system. Veterans Choice was set to expire this coming August; however, the House recently passed legislation with Rep. Posey's support to remove the sunset provision and allow this program to continue.

Mariner-5 Memorial Established at Patrick Air Force Base

A memorial was recently dedicated at Patrick Air Force Base to honor 13 brave American service members who lost their lives in the line of duty over 70 years ago. On December 5, 1945, crew members of the Martin PBM-5 Mariner Sea Plane took off from the Banana River Naval Air Station (now known as Patrick Air Force Base) on a rescue mission to assist their fellow Naval Servicemen in the disappearance of Flight 19. However, they never returned from their mission.

The need for a memorial was brought to the attention of Rep. Posey's office by a local reporter, and Rep. Posey's staff worked with officials at Patrick Air Force Base who were eager to get involved. The Mariner-5 memorial was paid for through private contributions by members of the NAS Fort Lauderdale Historical Association & Museum.



Rep. Posey is briefed on defense issues by officials at the Air Force Technical Applications Center at Patrick AFB.

House Approves Cost-of-Living Increase for Veterans

With Rep. Posey's support the House of Representatives approved the *Veterans' Compensation COLA Act*, bipartisan legislation to provide a cost-of-living increase for disabled veterans; compensation for dependents; clothing allowance; dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses. It also provides dependency and indemnity compensation to children paid to our wounded warriors and their families for injuries they suffered while serving our nation in uniform. Rep. Posey said the bill is an important part of making sure we keep our promises to our men and women in uniform and their families.

tant issues at www.posey.house.gov

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

Local Veteran Receives Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device for Past Bravery

Chief Warrant Officer Two Norman Heller of Viera was recently awarded his Bronze Star Medal with a "V" Device 49 years after courageously serving our nation in Vietnam. Rep. Posey's office worked with the Department of the Army and LTC Louis J. Kochanek, USA RET, of Kittery Point, ME, to help secure the medal for Heller. The Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device is worn to denote participation in acts of heroism involving conflict with an armed enemy.

In July 1968, while serving as a counter intelligence officer stationed in Saigon, Heller ran from the security of his quarters to aid an injured American soldier during a Viet Cong attack. He attempted to engage the enemy while under hostile fire, administered first aid and laid on the ground covering the seriously wounded soldier with his own body until the soldier could be safely moved to an aid station. Rep. Posey said Heller was an outstanding officer who served our nation for 20 years in the Korean War and during the height of the Vietnam War, including the Tet Offensive.



Rep. Posey presents Chief Warrant Officer Two Norman Heller with his Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device. Rep. Posey's office worked to acquire the medal for Heller 49 years after serving in Vietnam.

Legislation Battles VA Claims Backlog

Currently, nearly 600,000 veterans are stuck in the VA benefits backlog – those veterans waiting more than 125 days to get their claims processed. To step up efforts to battle the backlog, the House of Representatives recently approved the *Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act*. This bipartisan legislation, which was supported by Rep. Posey, removes bureaucratic red tape by allowing veterans to see local doctors for their initial diagnosis and avoid long wait times at VA hospitals, enabling quicker, more accurate rating decisions for veterans. It also requires the VA to swiftly award interim benefits to disabled veterans based off their initial diagnosis when the diagnosis clearly supports such awards so veterans receive important benefits quicker, while the VA continues to review their cases. Finally, it authorizes the VA to pay housing benefits under the GI Bill to student veterans in a more timely way.

Congressman Posey and his Staff are Here to **Serve Veterans**



Rep. Posey's District Office Staff (L-R): David Jackson, Mitchell Burke, Cheryl Moore, Dina Caballero, Patricia Febro, Rob Medina, and Patrick Gavin.

Rep. Posey and his staff are here to help veterans navigate federal agencies, to assist in obtaining medals and securing Defense Department records, and to help veterans address concerns with the VA. If you know of any veteran in our community who is having trouble with VA services, please reach out to them and encourage them to contact our office in Viera 321-632-1776, Titusville 321-383-6090 or Vero Beach 772-226-1701.

"My Father received a retroactive payment and will begin receiving monthly allocations toward caretakers through the VA program. We so appreciate all of your assistance to help us through this arduous and laborious process."

- J. Palumbo, East Orange

"...thanks to your efforts and those of your staff, my mother has begun receiving monthly Aid and Attendance Benefits for the Veterans Administration and has also received the lump-sum deferred payment awarded to her. I am very sure without your assistance this claim would have dragged on for months."

- J. Mederos, Melbourne