

VETERANS  
REPORT  
FROM  
PETER  
DEFAZIO



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington DC, 20515  
Official Business

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House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Veteran:

As a nation, we set aside Memorial Day to commemorate those who died while serving in the U.S. military. We also honor our nation's veterans for their service and the brave men and women in the U.S. military deployed around the world. Americans today live in peace because generations of American heroes have chosen to serve honorably in difficult missions around the world.

### The Oregon National Guard Returns Home

Recently, 2,700 Oregon National Guard troops returned home from Iraq. We owe them a smooth transition into civilian life. However, the on-going economic crisis poses a unique challenge to our newest veterans, particularly the wounded. They are struggling with the harsh economic realities of the recession. The multiple obstacles of injury, unemployment, and waiting for disability claims to be processed has forced too many veterans into foreclosure or bankruptcy.

In anticipation of their return, I introduced the Troops' Soft Landing, Employment, and Rural Transportation Act to help ease the adjustment from combat to civilian life. This bill provides a soft landing for National Guard and Reserve troops by allowing them to remain on active duty for up to 90 days, collect pay, and access reintegration services.

My legislation also expands the Work Opportunity Tax Credit to provide a better incentive for businesses to hire veterans from high unemployment areas like Southwest Oregon. Finally, the bill authorizes the VA to establish a grant program to provide transportation to veterans in rural areas where many must rely on the generosity of family and veterans service organizations get to VA facilities for appointments, exams, treatments, and testing services.

### Health Care Reform and Veterans

The new health care reform law does not alter the federal government's commitment to providing unique and comprehensive medical coverage to all those who have served or are still serving in the military. TRI-CARE and VA programs were fully protected in the legislation.

Health care reform allows children to remain on their parents' insurance plan until age 26. Because such a benefit might be helpful to veterans and active duty service members, I introduced the Fair Health Care for Military Families Act. The bill would extend this benefit to the children of military and veteran families covered under a Department of Defense or Veterans Administration health program by providing health coverage up until age 26. It is completely optional, but available if you need it.

### My Offices are Here to Serve You

EUGENE  
405 E. 8th Ave #2030  
Eugene, OR 97401  
541-465-6732  
800-944-9603

COOS BAY  
125 Central, Room 350  
Coos Bay, OR 97420  
541-269-2609

ROSEBURG  
612 SE Jackson Street #9  
Roseburg, OR 97470  
541-440-3523

WASHINGTON DC  
2134 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington DC 20515  
202-225-6416

On the Web: [www.defazio.house.gov](http://www.defazio.house.gov)

## Stable and Adequate Funding for Veterans Healthcare

The perennial struggle to pass the VA budget in a timely manner severely reduces the VA's ability to provide quality care to veterans. It also hampers the VA's ability to recruit well-trained medical professionals, maintain operational facilities, and acquire new equipment. Ultimately, our nation's veterans pay the price in degraded services. To remedy this, *H.R. 1016, the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act*, was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama. The Act requires two year funding for the VA medical system. The VA spending bill, H.R. 3082, followed suit and set aside \$48.2 billion in advanced appropriations for fiscal year 2011.

To permanently address persistent funding shortfalls for veterans programs, I have long supported the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act. This legislation would end the annual ramping up or down of this vital funding by making veterans health care spending a mandatory part of the federal budget. Mandatory funding eliminates the need for annual Congressional action. Budget increases would then be automatically provided based on the number of veterans eligible for care.

### Getting Veterans the Medals They Deserve

In the last few months, I have been honored to present ten Bronze Star medals, four posthumously, to U.S. Army veterans who served in combat over sixty years ago during World War II. All U.S. Army World War II veterans who received either the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB) or Combat Medic Badge (CMB) during the war are eligible for the Bronze Star medal for meritorious combat service.

Army policy allowing the meritorious Bronze Star medal for CIB and CMB recipients was established after WWII to recognize the service of U.S. Army infantryman and medics who performed their duties during sustained periods of combat. Though the policy has been in effect for over 60 years, most WWII veterans are not aware they are eligible. My staff and I can help veterans or their family members initiate a request and we can help locate the official documents required to prove Bronze Star eligibility. Please call my Eugene office at 541-465-6732 or 1-800-944-9603 for information and/or assistance.

## Improving the Roseburg VA Medical Center

Congress has increased veterans' funding by nearly \$23 billion since January 2007, including the largest single one year increase in the 77-year history of the VA. Unfortunately, many Oregon veterans have yet to see this increased funding result in better care at the Roseburg VA Medical Center. When I visited Roseburg in March, I heard veterans express great frustration about the bureaucracy and healthcare services at the medical center. Recent cuts in service have rightfully angered veterans. Senator Wyden and I sent a letter to Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Shinseki, strongly urging him to suspend any further cuts in service and requesting an independent review of any proposed cuts. Congress has directed billions of additional dollars to improve the VA healthcare system, but in my opinion the Roseburg Medical Center has not received adequate funds to maintain, let alone improve, its services. Whatever the cause, things must change at Roseburg. Senator Wyden and I will not let up on pressing the national and regional VA bureaucrats for top notch healthcare services at Roseburg.

As always, if you have trouble getting the benefits you earned or want to share an opinion, please contact me at one of the addresses listed at the top of the first page, or call my office toll-free at 1-800-944-9603.

Sincerely,

