

Concurrent Receipt

Currently, veterans who retire with 20 years of honorable service and have a service-related disability are not permitted to collect both retirement and disability pay concurrently. To rectify this situation, I have cosponsored H.R. 303, legislation that would permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both military retired pay and disability compensation.

Although H.R. 303 has 351 cosponsors in the House, the legislation has been held up in the House Committees on Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs since January because the Republican Leadership will not schedule the measure for a vote. I am one of 203 Members of Congress who have signed the discharge petition to force this legislation to be considered for a vote on the House floor. A discharge petition is an alternative method to bring up legislation

and requires the signatures of 218 members. In addition, I joined 112 of my colleagues in sending a letter urging that the final Defense Authorization bill eliminate this unfair law.

I believe it is critical to stop penalizing our disabled veterans if we are to fulfill our commitment to those who helped build America's strength and security. Our disabled veterans have been waiting years for this proposal to become law, and they should not have to wait any longer. Please know that I am working for passage of H.R. 303 to provide veterans the full compensation they have earned.



Congressman
ROBERT MENENDEZ
13th Congressional District ~ New Jersey



Congressman Menendez presents service medals to Lullita Fluellen, the widow of Air Force Sergeant Ulious Christopher Fluellen of Jersey City.

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Official Business



Robert Menendez
M.C.
PRSRT STD

Report to Veterans

Veterans Funding

In the House version of the Veterans Affairs – Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2004, Republicans slashed veterans' health care funding by \$1.8 billion from the level promised earlier this year. After learning of the cut, House Democrats sought to offer a bipartisan amendment to restore the promised funding, but the Republican Leadership refused to allow a vote on this critical amendment. The final bill provides \$25.2 billion for veterans' health care, an increase of only \$1.4 billion over last year.

This increase does not keep pace with hospital inflation or the growth in the number of veterans enrolled. The Bush Administration has cut over \$2 trillion in taxes but does not seem willing to find the resources to care for our nation's veterans. This is no way to say thank

you to those who have served our country with courage in the past, and it sends a terrible message to the brave men and women serving today in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world. I strongly believe that we must honor our commitment to our nation's veterans rather than give away a huge tax cut to our wealthiest citizens.

You can be assured that I will continue to fight for additional funding in this year's appropriations bill for veterans' health care. In fact, I recently sent a letter along with 120 of my House colleagues urging that \$1.8 billion be added for VA health care. In addition, I am a cosponsor of H.R. 2318, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act. This legislation would create guaranteed funding for veterans' health care through a formula fund based on the growth in the veterans' beneficiary population and the inflation rate other hospital systems expect to experience.



Congressman Menendez is proud to have once again joined the Jewish War Veterans of West New York on Memorial Day. Mr. Menendez is pictured speaking at the War Memorial at Veteran's Park in West New York.

Salute to Veterans

As a member of the Democratic Leadership, I have worked with my colleagues to develop a comprehensive agenda to show our support for key priorities of veterans, military retirees, military survivors, reservists and, of course, active duty personnel. The result is H.R. 2569, the Salute to Veterans and the Armed Forces Act, which I am proud to cosponsor. Specifically, this legislation would:

- ▲ fully repeal the law whereby a disabled military retiree must give up a dollar of retirement pay for every dollar of VA disability compensation received, an offset which no other federal retiree is subject to (also known as concurrent receipt);
- ▲ eliminate the reduction under the Survivor Benefit Plan for surviving spouses when they reach age 62;

- ▲ reduce delays in VA claims by requiring an interim benefits payment of \$500 per month when a claim has not been decided within 180 days of a remand decision;
- ▲ authorize \$1 billion more in VA health care to reduce waits for appointments;
- ▲ prohibit the Administration's plans to increase co-payments and establish VA enrollment fees;
- ▲ increase education benefits for Reserve and Guard personnel; and

- ▲ thank troops for their sacrifices by providing a one-time \$1,000 bonus for those who served in imminent danger status in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Flag Desecration

On June 3, 2003, the House of Representatives passed H.J. Res. 4, a constitutional amendment prohibiting the physical desecration of the flag of the United States. As a cosponsor of the resolution, I was one of 300 Members of the House who voted for it.

I am hopeful that the Senate will pass the resolution, thereby allowing the states to vote on this important amendment.



Dear Veteran,

Like you, I believe that the veterans of this country should be recognized and rewarded for their outstanding sacrifices and commitments to ensuring the freedom and safety of the American people. Therefore, I would like to take the opportunity in this newsletter to share with you what has transpired regarding veterans issues thus far in 2003.

America's military veterans have been instrumental in building and defending our democracy throughout this nation's history. Our veterans have made the ultimate contribution to this country – the contribution of personal sacrifice. For those of you who have worn the uniform, please know how much I appreciate your service to our nation.

You can be assured that I will continue to fight to make sure our veterans and their service to our nation are never forgotten. Please do not hesitate to contact me in Washington, DC at (202) 225-7919 or in New Jersey at (201) 222-2828, if I may be of assistance to you on this or any other issue in the future. It is a privilege to serve each of you.

Sincerely,

Robert Menendez



Congressman Menendez speaks to reservists from the Caven Point Army Reserve Center after the Caven Point Transfer Ceremony. Mr. Menendez played an integral role in the formal exchange of the Army Reserve Center to the State of New Jersey and the City of Jersey City.