

LARSON HONORS COMMITMENT TO VETERANS, VOTES FOR HISTORICAL FUNDING FOR VETS PROGRAMS

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Larson votes to provide the largest single increase in the 77 year history of the Veterans Administration

WASHINGTON- Today, Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) supported House passage of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill (HR 2642). This bill provides money to fund Military Construction and the Veterans Affairs Administration. The bill provides the largest increase in funding for veterans health care in the VA's 77-year history. It also addresses a recent increase in veterans' services and adds over 1,000 new claims processors to reduce the backlog of 400,000 benefits claims. It exceeds for the first time in its 21 year history the Independent Budget, and exceeds the President's request by \$3.8 billion.

"This bill sends a clear message to America's servicemen and women, their families, and our veterans that a grateful nation deeply respects their service and sacrifice," said Congressman Larson.

With passage of this bill, the 110th Congress will have voted for historic increases in veterans' health care and benefits programs, totaling nearly \$12 billion (including the joint resolution and the supplemental), to meet the needs of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and make up for the Bush Administration's past shortcomings in its treatment of veterans.

"There are over 250,000 veterans living in Connecticut and many more that will come home from Iraq and Afghanistan. They are our nation's heroes and have served and protected our nation with pride and dignity. We must give them the care and respect worthy of their sacrifice and they deserve no less," added Larson.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill:

- Significantly reduces the 400,000 claims backlog for veterans waiting for disability and other benefits by adding more claims processors.

- Supports critical maintenance of VA health care facilities.

- Makes five polytrauma centers and three Centers of Excellence for Mental Health and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) fully-operational this year, to care for those returning Iraq vets.

- Supports the development and operation of a toll-free phone and web-based hotline for veterans to report on deficiencies in VA medical facilities and care.

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