

(Washington, DC) - On Thursday, U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4) will honor America's veterans by voting for the largest single funding increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration. The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill will increase the VA budget by \$6.7 billion above the FY 2007 level and \$3.8 billion above President Bush's request. The measure is expected to pass with bipartisan support.

The vote will be part of Congressman Altmire's ongoing commitment to ensure the finest quality health care is provided to our nation's veterans. Since taking office in January, Congressman Altmire has worked to honor veterans by voting for historic increases in veterans' health care and benefits programs, totaling nearly \$12 billion. In addition, he has worked tirelessly to meet the needs of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, including authoring legislation that was incorporated into a bill passed by the House last month to ensure the proper treatment of traumatic brain injuries sustained by our returning veterans.

**"After years of neglect, this bill will provide the largest increase in VA health care spending in the organization's 77-year history,"** said Congressman Altmire. **"It is going to help us clear up the VA's 400,000 case backlog by hiring 1,100 new case workers. It's going to help us avoid issues like what happened at Walter Reed, and most importantly, it's going to give our veterans the care that they have earned and the care that they deserve."**

**"The federal budget is a reflection of the values of the American people,"** said Congressman Altmire.

**"No one should stand ahead of the nation's 23 million veterans, including over 60,000 in my district, when it comes to federal funding. We need to keep our promise to veterans and meet our commitment to provide care for those who have served and sacrificed so much to defend our country. It's a small price to pay for our freedom."**

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill:

- Increases funding for VA medical care, which will exceed the budget of the veterans' service organizations for the first time in its 22-year history, to ensure 5.8 million patients,

including 263,000 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, will receive the health care they deserve;

- Makes five polytrauma centers and three Centers of Excellence for mental health and Post Traumatic Stress Disease fully operational this year to care for those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Provides much needed non-recurring maintenance of VA health care facilities to prevent another Walter Reed-type scandal;
- Significantly reduces the backlog of claims by veterans waiting for disability and other benefits;
- Improves barracks, housing, and training facilities for returning troops through an unprecedented \$21.4 billion investment in military construction, family housing, and BRAC; and
- Commits funds to grow our military forces and begins the process of adding 65,000 Army, 27,000 Marine, and 9,000 National Guard and Reserve troops.

All of the major veterans groups strongly endorsed the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled Veterans of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Military Officers Association of America, Association of the United States Army, National Association for Uniformed Services, and AMVets.