

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) last night and today helped the House pass three important bills designed to improve and expand funding for veterans. The House approved a bill to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for veterans health care programs, a measure to expand U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care services for the 1.8 million women who have bravely served their country, and a third bill that enables more disabled veterans to receive both full military retired pay and veterans disability compensation at the same time.

"Our veterans made enormous personal sacrifices for our country and we must do everything we can to express our gratitude for their service," Hinchey said. "These bills we passed in the House will help ensure that more veterans have access to quality health care and that disabled veterans are not penalized for being eligible to collect retirement and disability benefits. Instead of trying to find ways to shortchange benefits for veterans, the federal government should be doing everything it can to ensure that veterans have access to quality health care and can collect all of the benefits they rightly deserve and earned."

The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act authorizes Congress to approve investments in VA medical care one year in advance in order to provide time for the VA to plan how to deliver the best care to an increasing number of veterans with increasingly complex medical conditions.

The Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act will expand and improve VA health care services for the 1.8 million women who have bravely served their country. It calls for: a study of barriers to women veterans seeking health care, an assessment of women's health care programs, medical care for newborn children of women veterans, enhancement of VA sexual trauma programs, enhancement of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) treatment for women, the establishment of a pilot program for child care services, and the addition of recently separated women veterans to serve on advisory committees.

The Disabled Military Retiree Relief Act of 2009 temporarily allows service members that have been retired for severe disability to concurrently receive military retired pay from the Department of Defense and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs if they also meet certain criteria. Many disabled veterans have unfairly had their retirement pay reduced by the amount they receive for disability.

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Hinchey joined the U.S. Navy after graduating from high school, serving in the Pacific Ocean on the destroyer U.S.S. Marshall.