

Altmire Bill to Protect Bonuses for Wounded Veterans Passes House

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4) praised today's passage of his bill, the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act (H.R. 3793), which ensures that members of the Armed Forces who are discharged as a result of combat-related wounds receive the full compensation to which they are entitled by the Department of Defense. Congressman Altmire introduced the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act, H.R. 3793, after the bipartisan Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, co-chaired by former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, uncovered a Department of Defense rule that unfairly penalized wounded soldiers by prohibiting them from receiving their full enlistment bonuses. Since Congressman Altmire introduced the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act in October, news reports surfaced nationwide that the military was demanding that wounded service men and women repay their bonuses because they were unable to complete their entire military obligations.

The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act passed the House today by a unanimous vote of 405 to 0. The measure passed the Senate last week.

"This legislation will ensure that from this point forward, every combat-wounded veteran injured in Afghanistan or Iraq receives his or her full enlistment or re-enlistment bonus," said Congressman Altmire. "No longer will American service men and women, who have served their country so bravely and honorably and have been injured in the line of duty, be served with a bill to repay their enlistment bonuses. No longer will these heroic men and women suffer the indignity of having their bonus payments cut off. Instead, my bill will require that injured soldiers not only keep the bonuses already paid to them, but are also paid every penny of their outstanding bonuses that they would have received had they been healthy enough to finish their service obligations."

"Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) is thrilled that the House has passed the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act, H.R.3793," said Todd Bowers of the IAVA. "Ensuring that wounded service members receive their full enlistment bonuses is a critical way to recognize the enormous sacrifice they and their families have made. We are grateful to Representative Altmire for bringing this important issue to the forefront and hope that the House and Senate will work together to get this bill signed into law as quickly as possible."

"As an ardent supporter and sponsor of key veterans' legislation, Representative Altmire, has walked the walk this Congress," said Justin Brown of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which has endorsed the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act. "The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act, assures our men and women of the Armed Forces that they will receive the bonuses they earned. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the men and women of our Armed Forces, are grateful for Representative Altmire's attention to detail and rapid response to the issue."

The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act will provide essential financial security to our injured men and women by guaranteeing full payment of bonuses earned and owed to them. The measure will:

- Guarantee that service members who die or are discharged for disabilities will not be required to repay any portion of their bonuses;
- Mandate the Department of Defense to provide full bonuses to any service members who die or are discharged for disabilities; and,
- Require bonuses to be paid within 90 days of discharge.

In addition to the IAVA and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act is supported by 34 other military and veterans' organizations, including the Military Coalition, Fleet Reserve Association, Disabled American Veterans, the Non Commissioned Officers Association, and the Blinded Veterans Association.

Congressman Altmire concluded, "Members of our Armed Forces have made every conceivable sacrifice for our nation and those that have been injured in service to our country have more than fulfilled the obligations of their service contracts. Paying them the bonuses that they were promised and that they have earned is the very least we can do to repay them for their bravery and sacrifice."