

Altmire, Wounded Warrior Speak Out in Support of Returning Veterans

(Ross Township, PA) - Flanked by local wounded warrior SPC Robert Kaminski and other area veterans today at the Ross Township Municipal Building, Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4) announced legislation that would ensure that members of the armed services 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.

"I thank SPC Kaminski, local veterans, and all Pennsylvanians currently serving their country," said Congressman Altmire. "There is no group that should stand before them when it comes to setting our federal priorities. I introduced the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act to ensure that when our brave men and women are wounded in battle, they receive full payment of their bonuses. It is unfair to deny them what they have rightfully earned and deserve."

According to Department of Defense policy, enlistees cannot receive their full enlistment bonus unless they fulfill their entire military obligation. Unfortunately, members of the armed services who are wounded while on active duty are not receiving their full bonuses because their service was prematurely cut short. The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act would correct this problem by requiring the Department of Defense to provide veterans who have been discharged due to combat-related wounds with full payment of remaining bonuses within 30 days of discharge. The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act is endorsed by the Military Coalition, a consortium of 33 nationally prominent military and veteran organizations representing 5.5 million members and their families. It is also supported by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Blinded Veterans Association, and Disabled American Veterans.

"To say that a soldier who has lost a limb on the field of battle or who can no longer hear or see due to an IED explosion has not fulfilled his or her service obligation is utterly outrageous," said SPC Kaminiski of Shaler, who was wounded in October 2006 by an IED explosion in Ashraf, Iraq. "On behalf of all wounded veterans, I wish to thank Congressman Altmire for his leadership in authoring legislation that will correct a policy that currently denies soldiers the compensation that they have earned but also for being at the forefront of ensuring that soldiers who have sustained traumatic brain injuries, like myself, receive the highest quality medical care."

The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act is another piece of legislation in a series of bills authored by Congressman Altmire to further assist America's service members and veterans: ensuring the proper screening and treatment of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and amending the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to allow family members of seriously wounded veterans to take leave. Both measures passed the House earlier this year. In addition, Congressman Altmire recently introduced the Active Duty Military Tax Relief Act (H.R. 3827), co-authored the Reservists Access to Justice Act (H.R. 3393), and passed the Small Business Investment Expansion Act (H.R. 3567) through the House.