

## Supporting Our Nation's Veterans

Since taking office, Congressman Altmire has worked to honor veterans by improving veterans' health care, strengthening benefits for our men and women in uniform today, and providing long overdue benefits for the veterans and military retirees who have already served. He has truly made this his top priority with six of his bills that assist veterans, reservists and their families being signed into law to date. Congressman Altmire is committed to working with his colleagues to ensure that no one stands before our nation's veterans when it comes to making federal budgetary decisions.

### The Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act

Congressman Altmire introduced the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act (H.R. 3793) after learning that the Department of Defense (DOD) was unfairly penalizing wounded service members by withholding their enlistment bonuses. His legislation would require DOD to provide combat-injured service members with full payment of their enlistment bonuses within 90 days of discharge. On December 18, 2007, the House of Representatives voted unanimously to pass the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act. Congressman Altmire's bill was subsequently included in the FY09 Defense Authorization Act (S. 3001) passed by the House and Senate in September 2008. For more information, see [Altmire, Casey, Local Veterans Hail Major Accomplishment].

### Restoring the Promise of the G.I. Bill

Congressman Altmire joined Congressman Harry Mitchell in introducing legislation to modernize the G.I. Bill (H.R. 5740), so that it could meet the educational needs of men and women currently serving in America's armed forces. Over the past 60 years, education benefits through the G.I. Bill have remained stagnant, while the cost of an education has skyrocketed. This legislation - signed into law on June 30, 2008 - will restore the promise of the G.I. Bill by providing Pennsylvania veterans with an education benefit of up to \$23,846 per year — an increase of almost \$14,000 per year. For more information, see [Altmire: Revamped GI Bill is Now Law].

### Authored First Expansion of FMLA Benefits in 15 Years

Congressman Altmire offered an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4986) that will allow military families to use Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) time to manage issues that arise as the result of the deployment of a spouse, parent or child. The amendment passed with wide bipartisan support and was signed into law by the president on January 28, 2008, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. For more information, see [Two Altmire Measures to Improve Care for Veterans, Military Families Become Law].

### Improved Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment and Screening

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) has become the signature injury of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with more than half of combat casualties returning home with associated brain injuries. To address this, Congressman Altmire introduced the Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Act (H.R. 1944) which ensures that our brave men and women are properly screened for TBI and receive the treatment they need and deserve. On January 28, 2008, the president signed this legislation into law as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. For more information, see [Two Altmire Measures to Improve Care for Veterans, Military Families Become Law].

### Passed the Largest Increase in VA Funding in History

Congressman Altmire voted for the largest single funding increase in the 77-year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and has testified twice before the House Budget Committee on the importance of this funding. This Congress has provided over \$16 billion in additional funding for the VA that will be used to strengthen health care services, invest in maintenance for VA health care facilities and add 3,500 claims processors to reduce the backlog of claims of veterans waiting for their earned benefits. For more information, see [Altmire: Congress' Record Investment in Veterans Care Becomes a Reality].

## Charles E. Kelly Commissary

Congressman Altmire worked with fellow Congressmen Mike Doyle and Tim Murphy to secure \$12 million in funding for a new, state of the art commissary and post exchange facility in the Pittsburgh region and ensure that the current commissary remains open until 2011. Without this facility, veterans and their families would be forced to drive almost 200 miles to access the products and services provided by the commissary and post exchange. For more information, see [Army Announces Support for New Commissary].

## Protecting the Employment Rights of Reservists

In 1994, Congress passed the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act in an attempt to protect the jobs of reservists who are deployed for active duty. However, reports surfaced that indicated reservists from Iraq and Afghanistan still face difficulties in regaining employment after returning home. Congressman Altmire introduced the Reservists Access to Justice Act (H.R. 3393) to ensure that returning reservists keep their jobs and employment benefits as required under current law.