

Altmire, Casey, Local Veterans Hail Major Accomplishment

(Washington, DC) – Today, U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4), U.S. Senator Bob Casey, Private First Class Jordan Fox of Mt. Lebanon, Commander Mike Bookser (VFW District 29) and local veterans met to hail a major victory for our nation's wounded warriors. With enactment of the fiscal year 2009 Defense Authorization Act (S. 3001), veterans will no longer be unfairly penalized for being unable to fulfill their entire military obligations as a result of a combat-related injury. Instead, as a result of nearly a year's worth of work by Congressman Altmire, Senator Casey and the veterans' community, these heroes will be guaranteed full payment of all bonuses promised to them.

Bill Guaranteeing Military Bonuses to be Signed into Law

October 8, 2008

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“This is an historic day for our nation's wounded warriors and completes a year-long effort to correct a great injustice affecting our brave men and women in uniform,” said Congressman Altmire. “Last year, when I learned that combat-injured service members were being denied their bonuses or worse being asked to repay them, I introduced legislation to end this practice and ensure they receive all enlistment bonuses promised. Our country needs to demonstrate that we will support our veterans not only with our words but also with our actions.”

“Tens of thousands of troops have been injured in Iraq with many of them struggling to support themselves and their families,” said Senator Casey. “They gave us their word that they would serve and protect us at any cost. With the passing of this legislation, we are able to honor the promises we made to them by providing them with the benefits they deserve and have earned.”

This issue came to light last summer 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. To address this, Congressman Altmire introduced the Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act (H.R. 3793) on October 10, 2007 and Senator Casey introduced the Wounded Warrior Bonus Equity Act (S. 2400) on December 3, 2007.

“I would like to personally thank Congressman Altmire, Senator Casey, and others who, when they learned that the DOD had sent me a bill, took action to address it,” said PFC Fox. “My situation was addressed within days because of their help. I'm glad to be here today to applaud their efforts to make sure it doesn't happen again.”

“Congressman Altmire and Senator Casey deserve praise for their efforts to guarantee full payment of bonuses promised to our nation’s wounded warriors,” said Commander Bookser. “This is a tremendous accomplishment for the veterans’ community and the Veterans of Foreign Wars commends them both for their continued work on behalf of all veterans.”

In November, news reports brought national attention to the Department’s efforts to recoup the bonuses of wounded service men and women, including PFC Jordan Fox. The House and Senate passed their respective bills in December, and subsequently included the bill in the fiscal year 2009 Defense Authorization Act. The fiscal year 2009 Defense Authorization Act passed the House on September 24, 2008 and the Senate on September 27, 2008. It has been sent to the president for signature and is expected to be enacted into law shortly.