



"As our thoughts and prayers remain with our brave men and women serving around the world and their families, we must continue to care for and honor the veterans who fought for our freedom and security. In Congress, I am always mindful of the obligation to provide our veterans with quality healthcare, economic opportunities, and retirement security. They deserve no less."

– Rush Holt

Keeping faith with those who have served in our Armed Forces is a sacred national trust. Rep. Holt believes that America has a moral obligation to ensure that veterans receive the health care, disability compensation, readjustment counseling, and job training and placement services that they have earned through their service to our nation. In 2007, Rep. Holt was honored to vote for the largest single increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration.

If you need Rep. Holt's assistance cutting through tape on a veterans issue, please click [here](#) .

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Preventing Military Suicides

A serious gap exists in military suicide prevention efforts - a gap that needlessly cost the life of one young Central New Jersey resident in September 2008. Sergeant Coleman Bean of East Brunswick, New Jersey did two combat tours in Iraq. In between and after those tours, he sought treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. Because Sgt. Bean was a member of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) – a pool of Reserve soldiers not assigned to any unit but available for mobilization if needed - he could not get treatment for his condition because the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs refused to take responsibility for Sgt. Bean and the thousands like him.

His father, Greg, poignantly has written, “He fell through the cracks. He had no advocate, no Army machinery to help him find his way through the system. He felt he was literally on his own. He made appointments with the VA to have an ulcer treated and to obtain treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. Those appointments were postponed. He was still waiting when he took his own life.”

Two federal agencies charged with helping prevent suicides among our returning troops utterly failed Sgt. Bean and his family. In order to help prevent another such tragedy, Rep. Holt introduced [legislation – named in memory of Sgt. Bean](#) – to require that someone from the Department of Defense regularly is checking on IRR soldiers and other reservists not assigned to a Guard or Reserve unit to make sure they are alright, and if they are not, to get them the help they need. The bill has passed the House and it awaits Senate action. While Rep. Holt still believes we need a legislative remedy to correct this problem, federal agency heads are capable of using the rulemaking process to bypass red tape and speed the delivery of care to our nation's veterans. In July, Rep. Holt also wrote a [letter](#) to the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Veterans Affairs, urging them to take action on military suicides.

On July 28, the House of Representatives unanimously passed Rep. Holt's amendment to allocate \$20 million into the Fiscal Year 2011 Department of Veterans Affairs budget for direct advertising and the use of online social media for suicide prevention outreach. The House passed the funding bill for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and it awaits Senate passage. View Rep. Holt's remarks on the House floor [here](#).

VA Funding

In 2007, Rep. Holt voted to increase the budget for veterans' health care by \$6.7 billion for Fiscal Year 2008, an increase of 7.2 percent over President Bush's request. This was the largest single increase in the 77-year history of the VA. Holt believes it is essential for the federal government to create a guaranteed funding stream for veterans' health care, adjusted for inflation and population growth, so that veterans and current members of our Armed Forces can be assured that their benefits will not expire. The VA urgently needs a predictable, reliable funding stream so that medical staff can be hired and retained, critical supplies and services reach the veterans who need them. That is why Holt has co-sponsored the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009 (H.R. 1016), which would provide a

two-year discretionary budget authority for the VA. It is the only way to ensure that the VA has the resources it needs to care for America's veterans.

21st Century GI Bill

In 2008, Rep. Holt helped Congress pass a GI Bill for the 21st Century. The original GI bill of 1944 launched millions of families on a course to achieving the American dream – and set the American economy on the right course after a draining war. However, over time the GI Bill educational benefits diminished and paid only about 70 percent of a public college education and 30 percent of a private college education.

Under the updated GI Bill, those who have served on active-duty for three years or more would qualify for a full educational benefit including the costs of a four-year education at the level of the most expensive in-state public school. Those who have served between three months and three years of active duty would qualify for a proportion of that full benefit.

eGenda: [A 21st Century GI Bill](#) (5-23-08)

Veterans Employment

Rep. Holt has championed legislative efforts to help unemployed veterans and soldiers returning from active duty find jobs. He has reintroduced a resolution to encourage U.S. employers to hire veterans and to designate the week that includes Veterans Day as “Hire a Veteran Week.”

Additionally, Holt has proposed the creation of the American Veterans Congressional Internship Program, a bill designed to help veterans get exposure to the legislative branch of government and increase their opportunities for future careers in government service. Veterans who have completed their military service deserve an opportunity to help influence public policy decisions so that those who follow them into military service benefit from their wisdom and experience.

Ending the Disabled Veterans Tax

While some progress has been made in changing the law so that military retirees who receive retired pay can also receive disability pay, there is more work to do. To ensure that military retirees receive 100% of both their retired pay and disability pay, Rep. Holt has co-sponsored the Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act (H.R. 333), which would permit veterans with a service-connected disability of less than 50 percent to claim both retired pay and disability compensation.

Other Useful Links

[House Veterans Affairs Committee webpage](#) [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) [Links to Veteran Service Organizations](#)

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