

Today marks America's national day to recognize our brave veterans and military retirees. Every November 11 since 1919, Americans observe this important day to celebrate America's veterans for their willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

The history of Veterans Day, first known as Armistice Day declared by President Woodrow Wilson in November 1919, began in the aftermath of World War I. The war officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, but the ceasefire between the Allied nations and Germany took place seven months earlier, specifically, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

The original concept for the celebration was for a day observed with parades and public meetings and a brief suspension of business beginning at 11:00 a.m. In 1926, Congress made each November 11 an official holiday. Armistice Day was primarily a day set aside to honor veterans of World War I, but in 1954, after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of the military in the Nation's history; after American forces had fought aggression in Korea, and at the urging of veterans service organizations, the Act of 1938 was amended to replace the word "Armistice" with "Veterans." With the approval of this legislation on June 1, 1954, November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, I want you to know that the needs of our veterans have been one of my top priorities. The Democrat majority passed significant legislation to provide historic budget increases for veterans such as expanding and improving access to health care, education, employment, funeral services for all veterans. It has been my honor to support the following legislative initiatives to help veterans and their families.

- As a member of the House Appropriation Committee, I have worked with my colleagues to create landmark budgets worthy of our nation's veterans. Since the 2007, Congress had provided a 60% increase in VA discretionary funding, adding nearly \$23 billion for veterans' health care and services.

- Congress successfully secured advance appropriations for the VA for the first time, providing a stable and uninterrupted source of funding for medical care for veterans one year in advance.

- Congress voted to provide an additional three years of VA health care eligibility for returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans (for a total of five years).

- We passed laws to improve and expand the VA's ability to care for returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury, while also addressing the rising instances of post-traumatic stress.

- The Post-9/11 G.I. Bill is the greatest overhaul of the G.I. Bill in over 20 years, covering the cost of a college education at a public university. This fall, nearly 300,000 veterans are enrolled in college as a result of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill and more than \$2.9 billion in education benefits have been paid to veteran students.

- The Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010 reauthorizes the VA work-study program and provides on-the-job training for veterans in the energy sector, by awarding competitive grants to three states that boast a diverse energy industry and have the ability to carry out such a training program.

- The Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010 increases burial and funeral benefits and plot allowances for veterans who are eligible for a burial at a national cemetery or who died in a VA facility from \$300 to \$700.

- Further, parents whose child gave their life in service to our country would be allowed to be buried in a national cemetery with that child when their veteran child has no living spouse or children.

I cannot thank our veterans enough for their patriotism, and unrelenting, unselfish service to help keep our country safe and free. Please join me in honoring our brave uniformed current and retired service members who have fought to protect our principles of freedom and democracy and keep us safe.