



MAINE VETERAN NEWS

From Congresswoman Chellie Pingree

Fighting to Protect Military Pay and Benefits



Advocates discuss issues at a veterans roundtable in Scarborough.

With the Congressional Super Committee failing to reach a consensus on reducing the deficit, many are concerned about the automatic cuts that will occur across the federal government in January 2013. As they should be, military retirement programs are exempted.

I oppose any increases to Tricare premiums and believe military retirement programs should remain different than civilian retirement plans. Military retention and recruiting depend on an attractive retirement plan.

I also oppose the Pentagon's proposal to drastically change the U.S. Family Health Plan—administered in Maine by Martin's Point—to require future enrollees to disenroll at the age of 65. This successful and popular program should continue running as it currently does.

Help for Victims of Military Sexual Trauma

Sadly, military sexual trauma remains a troubling problem for thousands of men and women who serve in uniform. But what's worse are the many obstacles these veterans have to overcome to receive benefits for help they need.

I recently introduced H.R. 930, a bill that would make it easier for veterans who were sexually assaulted in the military—and now suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)—to obtain disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill currently has 19 cosponsors and similar legislation has been introduced in the U.S. Senate.

I am also working with the VA to request they implement these changes on their own. In response to my efforts, the VA has issued additional training for VBA claims representatives and will identify MST-specific claims representatives at all Regional Offices. I will continue working to make this rule change permanent.

65 Years After Service, Veteran Gets Recognition He's Due



Rep. Pingree awards medals to WWII veteran in Thomaston

In October, I had the honor of awarding medals to 93-year-old Thomaston WWII veteran Ben Harding. He was a member of the U.S. Navy Armed Guard, serving aboard Liberty Ships during the D-Day invasion, and in the Pacific and Mediterranean theaters.

Services for Veterans and Their Families

It's an honor to help you and your family claim the benefits you've earned. Please call if you need assistance with:

*GI Bill benefits • VA claims
Recovering military medals
Issue with any federal agency*

Contact information

(207) 774-5019 • 1-888-862-6500

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Dear Friend,

It is an honor to represent you in Congress. With this annual newsletter, it is my hope to keep you informed of the work I'm doing in Congress on your behalf and keep you updated on the benefits you've earned.

We are very lucky to have so many veterans and military retirees call Maine their home.

These heroes deserve the best care and benefits we can provide. Whether it's Tricare plans or VA benefits, no veteran or service member should have to jump through bureaucratic hoops to get the services they've earned.

I am extremely proud to be a member of the House Armed Services Committee, where I advocate every day on behalf of military members and their families. As a new member of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, the quality of life of our military and retirees is always on my mind.

Thank you for your service to the nation. I hope to see you in Maine soon and wish you a happy and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress, First District of Maine

VA Health Care Expanded in Southern Maine

Veterans who live in rural states like Maine should not have to travel for miles to receive the health care and benefits their service has earned them, which is why I was happy to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony for the VA's new Mental Health Outpatient Clinic in Portland.



Rep. Pingree speaks on importance of benefits at opening of veterans clinic.

This clinic provides many services for veterans in Greater Portland, such as mental health counseling, smoking cessation programs, VA Home-based primary care and Clozaril clinic.

Help for Unemployed Veterans

So many Americans have been impacted by the economic downturn, especially veterans. After returning home, our veterans face a 12 percent unemployment rate.

The U.S. Department of Labor has two new initiatives geared toward helping unemployed veterans find jobs. The Gold Card Initiative provides 6 months of intensive reemployment and case management through all One Stop Career Centers. For more info, go to www.dol.gov/vets/goldcard.html.

My Next Move (www.mynextmove.org/vets/) is a website for veterans that provides a quick and simple search engine and aligns prior military experience and skills with similar civilian careers and training. There is also information on effective resume writing tips.