

SENATOR JAY ROCKEFELLER'S REPORT TO WEST VIRGINIA VETERANS

Dear Friends,

Despite the heated arguments in Congress over deficits and spending, one issue has remained unchanging: our commitment to veterans. I am determined to take care of America's former military – from health care and education to benefits, business resources and employment assistance. As the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs' longest serving member, I am proud to lead the fight in West Virginia. Veterans living in West Virginia deserve the care you've earned – from career investments to the proper compensation for you, your spouses and children. Veterans have sacrificed much for our state and country – you have selflessly served your nation during difficult times, and for this, you deserve the best services and benefits available. You will always have my deep gratitude and support.

All the best,



BUILDING A WEST VIRGINIA VETERANS' CEMETERY— HONORING THOSE WHO SERVE



Last fall, we celebrated the groundbreaking of the new Donel Kinnard Memorial State Veterans Cemetery in Institute – a cemetery that, in its first phase, will honor approximately 60,000 veterans across southern West Virginia. More than 100 veterans attended the event, along with state and local officials, and members of Don's family.

I am grateful for the support we've had through this process from all stakeholders – from the land donated by Dow and the state to funding from the federal government. The grant award of \$14 million is the largest grant ever awarded by the VA for a state cemetery – a fitting contribution for the great sacrifices our men and women have provided to our nation.

ROCKEFELLER KEEPING TABS ON VETERANS CLINICS IN LOGAN COUNTY

Operations at the Williamson Community Based Outreach Clinic remain suspended, and the Huntington VAMC is in the process of identifying another location or means to provide health care to the veterans in that area. I remain in touch with the director of the Huntington VAMC and am urging him to take steps to ensure that veterans in that area are receiving quality health care. My commitment to you is that I won't rest until this issue is resolved safely and in a way that ensures you get the care you deserve.



ADDRESSING VETERANS' NEEDS IN GREENBRIER COUNTY

This past April, I was excited to see local government officials, veterans and the staff of the Beckley Veterans Affairs Medical Center gather to dedicate the first veterans' clinic in Greenbrier County. I was proud to fight for this clinic and look forward to seeing the improvements it will make in the lives of veterans in the Greenbrier region. This health clinic is important for veterans who deserve better access to medical care. The outpatient facility will serve as a primary care clinic for an estimated 2,400 veterans in Greenbrier, Monroe, Pocahontas and Summers Counties, along with Allegheny County, Virginia. Whether veterans need flu shots, help with an X-ray, or just a check-up – this 8,836 square foot medical facility is now ready with caring professionals to meet veterans' needs.

HELPING HEROES IN MOUNDSVILLE

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the worksite for Helping Heroes – a non-profit, community-centered organization in Moundsville. It is the first of its kind in the Ohio Valley. I joined veterans and volunteers working to renovate the future location of Helping Heroes. Providing assistance to veterans is important, and homelessness among veterans is an ongoing challenge.

Jeremy Harrison, a local veteran, and his wife Susan, founded Helping Heroes to help homeless veterans. This facility will provide all of the support necessary to help homeless veterans get back on their feet and on the road to independence. Computer education, job preparation, life skills courses and benefits assistance are just some of the great things Helping Heroes will provide to West Virginia's homeless veterans. This is a worthy project and I'll continue doing everything I can to help support Harrison's mission to help our state's veterans.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – WHAT CONGRESS IS DOING FOR VETERANS

INFORMATION ON THE HIRING HEROES ACT

I am working on legislation in Congress to reduce unemployment among veterans in West Virginia and across the country. The *Hiring Heroes Act of 2011* would require job skills training for all service members returning home and create new direct federal hiring authority so that more service members have jobs waiting for them the day they leave the military. At a time when more than one in four veterans aged 18-24 are unemployed, a focus on job skills training and veteran mentorship programs in the working world will be extremely valuable.

THE VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT (COLA) ACT OF 2011

I am working on bipartisan legislation to increase veterans' compensation by tying their Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) to the automatic COLA already provided by the Social Security Administration. The COLA would affect several important benefits including: Veterans' Disability Compensation, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, including for surviving spouses and children. Millions of veterans across the country, including thousands in West Virginia, would receive an increase in compensation benefits next year if we are successful on this bill.

UPDATE ON POST-9/11 VETERANS GI BILL

In January, President Obama signed into law the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010. The new law, which I strongly supported, expands the number of eligible veterans by including a group of National Guard Reserve veterans who were previously ineligible. It also increases educational opportunities by paying benefits for on-the-job and vocational training, as well as provides an annual \$1,000 book allowance to service members training while on active duty.

VETERANS SHARE THEIR STORIES

Another highlight from this past year was participating in the *Take a Veteran to School Day™* program at East Fairmont High School – one of 18 schools across the state joining the program to honor West Virginia's veterans. This important event brings veterans to high schools to share with students their real-life experiences, and records their stories as part of American history. This was a successful meeting and allowed our veterans to talk about their experiences and give students first-hand accounts of some of our nation's most historic events.

UPDATES ON WV VETERANS FACILITIES

Martinsburg VA Medical Center (VAMC): The Martinsburg VAMC held a ribbon cutting for the Heroes Opportunity for Progress and Enrichment (HOPE) Center on July 7, 2011. The new, 33,000 sq. ft. project relocated the previous outpatient mental health functions, as well as created additional space for program and service expansions.

Clarksburg VAMC: Funding has been approved for the design phase of a parking garage project.

Beckley VAMC: The Beckley VAMC parking garage project is in the construction phase, pending one last permit from the City of Beckley.

Huntington VAMC: The Huntington VAMC's Mental Health Complex was completely renovated.



PLEASE CONTACT MY OFFICE IF YOU NEED ANY HELP...

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