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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE UNITED STATES

November 2021

Aloha, Hawai'i veterans and 'ohana! I sincerely hope that this report to you from Capitol Hill amidst the continuing pandemic and much uncertainty finds you and yours safe and well.

Each November we celebrate both Veterans Day and National Veterans and Military Families Month. It is our renewed opportunity to recognize and honor our veterans past, present and future and those who are your



full partners in your service. And for me, serving as U.S. Representative for you and some 110,000 of your fellow veterans and families throughout our Hawai'i, it is my own opportunity not only to express my own deepest appreciation but to report to you on our actions in Congress to deliver on our nation's promise.

My mission in the U.S. House of Representatives on veterans issues remains threefold: (1) forge and implement the best possible policies for our nation's some 19 million veterans; (2) assure that our federal veterans programs actually work in the often unique circumstances of Hawai'i; and

(3) assist you and yours with your own individual concerns on benefits and other matters however possible. Here I report to you on just a few examples of my efforts in these areas.

Assuring Full Funding of Veterans Programs. Our many federal veterans programs are only as good as the federal funding for their success, and assuring full funding is my major effort. I do so mainly through my membership on the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations, which allocates all federal discretionary funding annually, and on our committee's Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies (MilCon-VA), which allocates all Veterans Affairs (VA) and related veterans funding. Earlier this year, in our Fiscal Year 2022 budget bill, we allocated \$113.1 billion to the VA, a ten percent increase over the previous year. This is sorely needed across all veterans programs including health and housing and specific needs especially women veterans.





Addressing Veterans Homelessness & Mental Health. These are especially critical areas of our veterans assistance with rapidly growing needs. In our Appropriations MilCon-VA Subcommittee, we fought successfully to include \$13.2 billion for mental health and \$2.2 billion for homeless assistance in our current year funding, an increase of \$2.5 billion over the prior year. We also included \$256 million to ensure adequate staffing and training at Veterans Crisis Line call centers, additional funding for the Governor's and Mayor's Challenge Programs to prevent veterans suicide, and a VA reporting requirement on veterans in unstable housing whose living situations do not rise to "homeless."



Pursuing Toxic Exposure Claims. Toxic exposure concerns and claims continue to rise across the country including my office. In MilCon-VA, we pursued measures to address toxic exposure in our military, including (1) urging the VA to establish new presumptions of service-connection, (2) establish a burn pit registry similar to the provisions in H.R. 2601, the SFC Heath Robinson Burn Pit Transparency Act, which I cosponsored, and (3) prioritize Blue Water Navy veterans care.

Correcting Concurrent Receipt. Allowing concurrent receipt of veterans disability payments and retirement is a longstanding issue impacting over 670,000 veterans across the country, including some 6,300 in our Hawai'i. I joined many colleagues in both parties in cosponsoring three bills to correct this unfairness – H.R. 303, H.R. 333 and H.R. 1282 – and remain committed to achieving their passage.

Commencing Advanced Leeward Outpatient Healthcare Access (ALOHA) Project. This critical long-delayed facility will serve veterans on Oahu's west side, which has seen a large growth in both general population and veterans, while relieving worsening overcrowding at the Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical

Center at Tripler (including parking, also one of my specific efforts in MilCon-VA). I worked with my Hawai'i delegation partners to finally secure release of the funding needed to commence construction. We also introduced legislation to name the facility after the late Senator Daniel K. Akaka, a World War II veteran and early champion of the project.



Assisting You and Yours with Your Own Concerns. One of my most critical responsibilities is assisting my individual constituents with their own issues, especially with our federal government. This year alone, we have assisted nearly 3,000 constituents on individual matters. Many of these issues are questions and concerns about federal veterans programs, especially health, housing and other benefits and service records. My goal is to answer questions and solve problems wherever I can, including getting answers and action from federal veterans programs. This work also provides me with invaluable insights into whether our veterans programs are working back home with you and how I can use my office to fix problems and improve policies and programs for all veterans. If you or a fellow veteran or anyone else you know needs help we might provide, whether or not veterans-related, please do not hesitate to visit my website at <https://case.house.gov/forms/casework>, contact me at ed.case@mail.house.gov or call my Honolulu office at (808) 650-6688.



Please consider assisting my efforts by sharing this letter with other veterans. For much more on my office and activities, please go to <https://case.house.gov>. Please also sign up for regular updates through my e-newsletter and social media at <https://case.house.gov/contact>. We truly welcome your questions and comments on any matter.

I hope that this brief report has provided a useful update on my actions for our veterans and your 'ohana across our country and our Hawai'i. It is a deep honor and serious responsibility to represent and serve you and yours in Congress, and I humbly thank you again for your service.



Mahalo,

Ed Case

Congressman Ed Case –
Hawai'i-First District

