

2024 Veterans Report

from Congressman Ed Case

November 23rd
Veterans Talk Story
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November 2024 Congressional Report To Hawai'i Veterans

To the over 110,000 men and women of Hawai'i who wore our nation's uniform and to your 'ohana, I extend my deep aloha and respect as we honor you for your service on this Veterans Day. I also report back to you on some of my activities in Congress on behalf of our nation's veterans, seek your continued guidance, and invite you to join me personally or remotely at a special talk story community meeting focused on veterans issues.

Assuring Full Funding of Veterans Programs

As I complete my sixth year on the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, responsible for all federal discretionary funding, I have continued my work to fully fund the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which is charged with caring for those "who have borne the battle" as well as to assist their families, caregivers and survivors.

This September, Congress approved and the President signed into law H.R. 9468, a supplemental funding measure to cover a budget shortfall in the VA's Office of Benefits Administration. This provided an immediate \$3 billion to ensure that veterans continued to receive assistance under our landmark PACT Act of 2022, which extended benefits for exposure to toxic substances. Without this funding, veterans and survivors' payments could have been delayed or ended on October 1st.

The PACT Act, which I fully supported, increased enrollment in VA health care and benefits far more than originally projected. According to the VA, there are now a record number of veterans receiving disability or compensation benefits, a total of 6.6 million, up from 6.3 million last year. I will continue to work to ensure full funding of PACT and other promised benefits to our veterans.

Congress is still considering funding levels for Fiscal Year 2025. Our House-passed version of the VA appropriations measure allocated almost \$129 billion for the VA. It funds many critical efforts, such as \$1.3 billion to meet the need for specific care for women veterans and support the Office of Women's Health, including its childcare initiative.

Our Fiscal Year 2025 measure also funds important programs that deal with homelessness and associated conditions, including mental health issues and drug dependency. For example, it calls for:

- \$3.2 billion for Veterans' Homelessness Program Resources to enhance homeless veterans service providers ability to provide high demand care such as health services, substance use disorder programs, compensated work therapy and other supportive services.
- \$263 million for opioid treatment and prevention efforts.
- \$6.4 billion for Telehealth and Connected Care. This will continue expansion of telehealth services and includes additional mental health, primary care and rehabilitation services.
- \$2.5 million to increase outreach to private organizations focused on mental health care for veterans and their families.
- \$22.8 billion for the Cost of War Toxic Exposure Fund, which provides annual funding to implement the PACT Act.

I will also continue to cosponsor legislation supporting our veterans, such as the Deliver for Veterans Act. It would expand a VA grant program to cover shipping costs for disabled veterans who require modified vehicles for transportation. This will especially help veterans in our state who endure high shipping costs compared to the mainland.



Personally presenting a too-long-delayed Purple Heart to Bernarr Kumashiro for cousin Cpl. Masaru Kumashiro, presumed killed in action but remains unrecovered in the Korean War.



Joining veterans at the Nisei Soldiers' Memorial Service at the National Cemetery of the Pacific

Akaka Clinic Opens in Kalaeloa and Veterans Home in Kapolei to Open Its Doors Soon

In April, I was honored to join the Akaka family and many others in the grand opening of the much-anticipated Daniel K. Akaka VA Clinic in Kalaeloa. This \$130 million, 88,675 square-foot facility doubles the capacity of the VA Pacific Islands Healthcare System on O'ahu. The staff there provides primary and mental health care, x-ray, laboratory and diagnostic services, a pharmacy and specialty care for veterans on O'ahu. Veterans and your 'ohana report to me that they have been very satisfied with services at this major addition to our veterans care in Hawai'i; I welcome your own feedback so that we can assure we are fully utilizing this facility.

We also eagerly await the opening of the Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home in Kapolei. The 120-bed long-term care nursing facility with single-occupancy rooms will be the first state veterans home on O'ahu, where more than two-thirds of Hawai'i's veterans live. I have long supported the federal grant program that provides federal assistance to states like ours in order to provide critically needed long-term care. The Veterans Home is anticipated to open sometime early next year. For updates, go to the Veterans Home web site at <https://www.dka-svh.org/>.



Joining the Akaka 'ohana at the grand opening of the Daniel K. Akaka VA Clinic in Kalaeloa

Addressing the Needs of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Veterans

I continue to focus especially on the often unique challenges of delivering full veterans' health and other benefits in a diverse island state. Our Hawai'i veterans and their families make up one of the largest percentages of veterans populations of any state in our nation, including in such key areas as women and minority veterans. The distinctive qualities of our island home sometimes lead to complications in the delivery of services through the VA to all of our diverse veterans, and I am always looking to tailor veterans services to address any unique needs or complications.

As one effort, I have sought to assure that our Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations measure continues to support the VA's Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islanders Center, as well as having the VA develop a plan for fully implementing benefits for veterans living in our partner Freely Associated States (Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands). Through my assignment on the House Appropriations Committee, I helped create this new center, located on Koapaka Street in Honolulu. The doctors and scientists at the center will coordinate research from all over the Pacific Islands and the United States to specifically address veterans' health in our Hawai'i and throughout the Pacific, and to discover ways to improve care modalities, delivery of care and other factors that will improve health outcomes.

Assisting You and Yours with Your Individual Needs

One of my main responsibilities is assisting you and yours with your own individual needs. Since my return to Congress in 2019, my office has assisted over 10,000 constituents on individual matters, including federal veterans programs, record-keeping, housing, and service-related issues.

If you or a fellow veteran or anyone else you know needs help, please visit my website at <https://case.house.gov/forms/casework> or call my Honolulu office at (808) 650-6688.

Asking for Your Continued Guidance

My efforts in Congress for you and your fellow veterans and 'ohana depend on my staying closely connected with you and your organizations, and I need and ask for your kōkua in keeping our connection strong. You can especially help by sharing this newsletter and my offer of assistance with your fellow veterans (you can forward an electronic copy from <https://case.house.gov/newsletters/>). And, of course, please join my special Talk Story community meeting focusing on veterans specifically either in person or online on Saturday, November 23rd (detail to right).

Please go to <https://case.house.gov> for further information on my efforts and 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.

It is a deep honor and serious responsibility to represent and serve our Hawai'i veterans and your 'ohana in Congress, and I humbly thank you again for your service.

Mahalo,

Ed Case
Congressman Ed Case
Hawai'i-First District

Scan this code to go to my website >
case.house.gov



VETERANS CONGRESSIONAL TALK STORY
Saturday, November 23, 2024
9:00am to 10:30am Hawai'i time
O'ahu Veterans Center
1298 Kukila Street
Watch the livestream on <https://www.facebook.com/RepEdCase>

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