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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE UNITED STATES

May 2022

From my office and me to our Hawaii's 110,000-plus veterans and your 'ohana, aloha!

This May we again celebrate Military Appreciation Month, in recognition of those who wear our country's uniform and their families, and Memorial Day, in honor and remembrance of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is a both thankful and solemn month, as we reflect anew that our freedom comes at a great price.

It is also a month in which we recommit ourselves to the promises made to our nation's veterans and your families.

In that spirit, I report to you again on the opportunities and challenges we face in Congress in delivering on those promises, as well as my own efforts on your behalf on Capitol Hill and back home throughout Hawai'i.



Laying a Memorial Day wreath of remembrance at National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific

**Fully Funding and Overseeing Our Federal Veterans Programs.** The full range of veterans' benefits we have enacted over a century-plus are only as good as the federal funding that implements and delivers them. That is the kuleana of the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations, responsible for some \$1.5 trillion in annual funding of all federal discretionary programs, and specifically of our Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies, responsible for all funding of the Veterans Administration, our national cemeteries and battle monuments, and other federal efforts that directly impact our veterans.

I am in my fourth year of service on our Appropriations Committee and on our Milcon-VA Subcommittee, and so I continue to be deeply involved in funding all of these efforts. In March of this year, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Fiscal Year 2022 federal funding measure we developed, including fully \$112 billion for the VA, an increase of nearly \$8 billion over the prior year. I am already hard at work in Appropriations and our Milcon-VA Subcommittee on our Fiscal Year 2023 annual funding.

My responsibilities in Appropriations and elsewhere are not just to secure funding, but to follow that funding all the way through to its intended purposes. Much of my effort in these



Hosting U.S. House Veterans Committee Chair Mark Takano, Vice Chair Amata Radewagen and colleague Michael San Nicolas in meeting with O'ahu veterans

2022 Veterans Report  
from Congressman Ed Case



past year has focused on assuring that two critical new veterans facilities in West O'ahu, the Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home and the Advanced Leeward Outpatient Healthcare Access (ALOHA) Outpatient Clinic, are completed and commence operations. It is deeply gratifying to see those goals almost accomplished.

My service on Appropriations is also not just about funding but about Congressional oversight of programs and needs. This allows me to focus on program additions and changes to address national veteran's issues and those unique or more important to our Hawai'i. The areas I have pursued include veterans telehealth, homeless assistance programs, rural health initiatives, burial benefits and more. I always welcome your thoughts on any issue you believe I should pursue further.



Visiting the Army's Jungle Operations Training Center above Wahiawā

**Ensuring That Veterans Exposed to Toxic Substances Receive Full Benefits.** We all know that our veterans have faced an expanding number of severe health challenges linked to their service, yet also unacceptable are hurdles in establishing service connection for health and related benefits. We earlier addressed some of these challenges by establishing a presumption of service connection for illnesses associated with exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam, but many more illnesses were not similarly addressed, especially those associated with service in the Gulf Wars.

With a bipartisan majority, including my vote, the U.S. House recently passed comprehensive legislation to address the healthcare needs and benefits of veterans exposed to an array of toxic substances. H.R. 3967, the Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, would recognize a presumption of service connection for veterans suffering from certain types of cancers and respiratory illnesses due to exposure to



Talking federal legislation with a veteran volunteer at the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum

burn pits in Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon and nine other countries. Further, veterans exposed to radiation during cleanups of radioactive materials in Spain, Greenland or Enewetak Atoll and Agent Orange in American Samoa, Cambodia, Guam, Johnston Atoll, Laos or Thailand during the Vietnam War would also receive a presumption of service connection for their respective related conditions. Finally, our measure would implement a

long-overdue overhaul of how the VA determines the presumption of service connection for toxic exposure by creating an advisory committee to evaluate and make recommendations based on scientific evidence. These long-overdue reforms are currently under consideration in the Senate.

**Standing with Ukraine.** Russia's invasion of Ukraine was not only an unjustified and unprovoked attack on a sovereign, independent, aligned country, but on the democracy and international rules-based order that you have served and fought, and too many have died, to defend. Whether or not Russia succeeds will largely determine whether we face other Ukraines by Russia or its fellow authoritarian countries throughout our world. Russia cannot succeed, and I have joined most of my colleagues in Congress in supporting tens of billions in emergency funding to Ukraine, sanctions and other efforts. Most recently, I voted for House passage of a bipartisan measure developed in my Appropriations Committee to provide another \$40 billion in support of Ukraine, to go with some \$18 billion we earlier provided. Back home, I have sought to waive the Jones Act to allow international shipping to transport domestic oil to Hawai'i to make up for suspended Russian oil imports because U.S. tankers are few and not available to us.

**Assisting Your and Yours with Your Individual Needs.** 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.

**Asking for Your Continued Guidance.** My efforts in Congress on behalf of you and your fellow veterans and 'ohana are only as good as my ongoing close connection with you and your organizations, and I need and ask for your kōkua in keeping that connection strong. Please consider sharing this newsletter and my offer of assistance with your fellow veterans (you can forward an electronic copy at <https://case.house.gov/newsletters/>).

Please also 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.

I hope that this 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



Listening to veteran concerns at groundbreaking for new Daniel K. Akaka State Veterans Home in Kapolei