

### February 1, 2007

As we enter into February and the new Congress is in full-swing, I wanted to take the opportunity to alert you to my committee and subcommittee assignments, as-well-as outline my objectives and goals as a Member of these committees.

In the 110th Congress, I will be a Member of the Veterans' Affairs and Homeland Security Committees. Under the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I will serve on the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee. Additionally, under the umbrella of the Committee on Homeland Security, I will serve as a Member of the Border, Maritime & Global Counterterrorism and Transportation Security & Infrastructure Protection Subcommittees.

I have always been an ardent supporter of America's Armed Forces members, and I can assure you that will not change. During the first weeks of this Congress I have already introduced H.R. 89, the Combat-Related Special Compensation Act; H.R. 303, Retired Pay Restoration Act; and H.R. 704, the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Remarriage bill.

These three pieces of legislation will alleviate unfair burdens on our nation's wounded veterans and the families of our fallen heroes. The Retired Pay Restoration Act would, among other things, provide for the concurrent receipt of retirement pay and disability compensation for wounded veterans that have 20 or more years of service to this country. The Combat-Related Special Compensation Act expands the eligibility for the current combat-related special compensation program to combat disabled veterans who were medically forced to retire before attaining 20 years of service. The DIC Remarriage bill will allow widows of Armed Service Members that were killed during active duty or died due to a service-connected cause to continue to receive annual benefits if they remarry after the age of 55.

Our nation's veterans have earned and deserve the utmost respect, best possible services and care for the sacrifices they and their families have made to defend this country - especially under the constant threat of global terrorism.

It is a distinct honor and a tremendous responsibility to be a Member of the Committee on Homeland Security. In the era of the Global War on Terror, it is clear that our government has no greater duty than to ensure the safety of every American and our homeland. As a Member of the Committee on Homeland Security, I look forward to working with every interested party to craft legislation and policies that ensure the utmost safety for this nation and its citizens.

My subcommittee assignments will allow me to enact and review legislation aimed at securing our land and sea borders, as-well-as our transportation and infrastructure. The Port of Tampa is one of the largest in this nation handling, 50 million tons of cargo per year - making it an attractive target to those bent on pursuing an agenda of hate and violence. Working to ensure Tampa's as-well-as every American ports' security will be among my highest priorities and

Our nation is currently fighting against the great world threat of the 21st century - global

terrorism. Our government must come together to address this threat in one voice. Additionally, we must ensure that our brave men and women who are fighting for freedom are not forgotten nor neglected once their duty has been performed. As a Member of these committees and subcommittees I pledge to work with all parties to ensure we craft the best possible legislation to achieve all of these goals.

*The author is Rep. Gus Bilirakis from Florida's Ninth District*