

Bilirakis Initiatives for Veterans and Active Duty Servicemembers Approved by House

WASHINGTON (25 September) – U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.) joined with his colleagues in supporting two measures designed to improve the lives of veterans and active duty and retired servicemembers.

The Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act (S. 2162) authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to spend nearly \$13 million for a new 50,000 square-foot multi-specialty outpatient clinic in the city of Brandon, Fla. and a new 100,000 square-foot primary care offsite facility for the James A. Haley VA Medical Center in Tampa, Fla. The House passed the bill unanimously.

Congressman Bilirakis successfully placed language in the 2007 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 110-161), which called for a feasibility study for a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Brandon, Fla.

“The addition of these two local veterans’ medical facilities will enhance essential health care services for Bay area veterans,” said Bilirakis. “I am especially pleased that this legislation moves forward my efforts to establish a VA outpatient clinic in Brandon to serve veterans in Southeastern Hillsborough County.”

Additionally, the House passed S. 3001, the Fiscal Year 2009 Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), by a vote of 392 to 39. The NDAA includes a provision specifically advocated for by Bilirakis, which authorizes a 3.9 percent increase in pay for U.S. military personnel. For the second year in a row, Bilirakis introduced legislation that would guarantee a minimum pay increase for military personnel that is one half percent above the President’s annual budget request.

“I am pleased that, the House has again acted to increase military pay at a level that is more competitive with the private sector,” said Bilirakis. “Closing this gap is critical to ensuring that the uniformed services continue to attract and keep quality men and women.”