

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Texas Democrats believe that our veterans should be awarded all the benefits they have been promised, honored for their service, and accepted back into society with open arms.

Providing education benefits to veterans for their service enables them to be the next generation of leaders, business owners, and highly skilled workers. Historically, empowering

returning veterans to obtain education, at any level, has benefitted America as a whole, and ushered in eras of prosperity. Texas Democrats wish to see this continue, and will do so by:

- supporting and maintaining the Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) in its entirety;
- supporting and maintaining the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Chapter 31), and allowing the 42 months of benefits to be non-consecutive;
- enabling the direct translation of military job training (EMT, vocational, communications, etc) to be recognized by states and federal programs;
- fully fund the Hazlewood Act entitlements, allow the transfer of those entitlements to dependents, and study allowing non-Texas enlistees to use those entitlements;
- support and encourage school cooperation with veterans struggling with physical disabilities and PTSD, and provide reasonable accommodations;
- encourage every school, public and private, to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program
- allow for the transfer of remaining Chapter 31 and Chapter 33 entitlements to dependents, regardless of time in service;
- allow Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) to be collected in both Chapter 31 and Chapter 33 programs.

Veterans put both their bodies and their minds on the line when they answered their call to service. Many return home with physical wounds, and many more return home with wounds invisible to their fellow citizens. Texas Democrats know that the death of even one veteran on the homefront, be it self inflicted or by lack of access to healthcare, is a tragedy to the entire nation, and having veterans live on the streets is shameful. Texas Democrats wish to remedy this by:

- extending the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom coordinator program to all separated service members, regardless if they served in a conflict;
- increase Combat Related Special Compensation entitlement payments;
- extend Tricare Standard/Extra/Prime health insurance eligibility to all service members who served in any conflict or hazardous duty area;
- continue and support the Veterans Choice Program, and encourage acceptance of the program by all private medical providers;
- strive for 100% enrollment of separated service members;
- expand and support the VA Domiciliary Care Program and the associated Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Programs (MH RRTPs);
- establish communication links between local homeless shelters and the VA to identify homeless veterans;
- establish community service programs to identify homeless veterans, and facilitate their integration into an associated VA Domiciliary Care program or MH RRTPs;
- continue, expand, support, and fully fund the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program;
- allow VA disability payments to increase based on the rate of inflation;
- hold individual VA hospitals, providers, and administrators to high standards;
- audit VA hospitals with failing performances;
- support crisis hotlines for veteran suicide; and
- upgrade the status of any LGBTQ service members discharged for their sexual orientation to Honorable and allow them to receive appropriate benefits.

Empowering veterans economically allow them to successfully reintegrate into their communities, and provides them with the stability needed post service separation. Texas Democrats believe that enabling veterans to buy houses, land, and start businesses not only helps them, but helps their community, state, and country. In order to do so:

- continue the VA Secured Home Loan program in its entirety;
- continue the Veterans Land Board program in its entirety;
- establish a VA secured loan program similar to the Secured Home Loan program for small business start up;
- provide low cost child care to recently separated servicemembers transitioning to work or attending school;
- support and expand veterans services courts in order to address veteran-specific legal needs; and
- support homestead exemptions for disabled veteran and surviving spouses.