

# Report to Veterans from Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

SEPTEMBER 2005

Dear New Yorker,

Like many of you, I was angered by the June "discovery" that funding for the Veterans Health Administration was short by \$1 billion. I joined with all my Democratic colleagues in demanding that the President immediately fix the shortfall in funding, and on July 28th the House passed \$1.5 billion in emergency supplemental funding for veterans health care. This bill, which passed the Senate the following day, was signed into law by the President on August 2nd.

Furthermore, I strongly objected to the Bush Administration's fiscal year 2006 budget which proposed underfunding critical veterans medical programs by \$3 billion. This budget also recommended a \$250 enrollment fee for veterans while increasing the prescription drug co-payment for some veterans from \$7 to \$15. At a time when servicemen and women are returning from duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, adequate services for veterans are even more critical.

I am a cosponsor of H.R. 2131, the "New GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century Act," comprehensive legislation that will ensure that veterans receive all the benefits to which they are entitled. I also have cosponsored H.R. 515, the "Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2005," which would ensure that the health care programs serving the nation's veterans receive funding based on the number of veterans served and the overall medical inflation rate for hospitals—not an arbitrary budget figure.

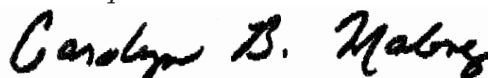
I also support a number of other bills introduced in the current session including H.R. 2959, which would establish Parkinson's Disease Research Education and Clinical Centers in the Veterans Health Administration, and H.R. 1352, which would create a tax credit for employers who hire certain veterans who served in Afghanistan or Iraq.

As the session of Congress progresses, I'll continue to work to ensure that veterans receive appropriate health care, housing, education, and training programs. The men and women who risked their lives for our country deserve the best our nation can offer.

I'm married to a Navy vet, the daughter of a veteran of World War II, and the sister of a Vietnam vet—so fighting for veterans' issues literally hits close to home. I want the active duty troops of today to know that while they are serving our country, those of us here at home (and in Congress) are fighting for their needs.

Please don't hesitate to contact my office if we can be of assistance to you.

Sincerely



Carolyn B. Maloney

## E-mail updates

If you'd like to receive updates from me by e-mail about news and issues affecting New York and the nation please sign up at [www.house.gov/maloney](http://www.house.gov/maloney)

Regular mail to my Washington office is subject to screening delays. If you would like to reach me quickly about an issue in Washington, the best methods now are via the internet at [www.house.gov/maloney](http://www.house.gov/maloney) or by fax at 202/225-4709.

**Washington, D.C. :**  
2331 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
202/225-7944

**Manhattan:**  
1651 Third Avenue, Suite 311  
New York, NY 10128  
212/860-0606

**Queens:**  
28-11 Astoria Blvd.  
Astoria, NY 11102  
718/932-1804

**Web page:**  
[www.house.gov/maloney](http://www.house.gov/maloney)

## A new GI 'Bill of Rights' for a new century

Congress enacted the original GI Bill in 1944 to support the troops returning from service in World War II. By providing them with college educational benefits, home loans at reduced rates, and medical coverage, our nation eased

the transition from the horrors of war back to civilian life, and also helped fuel the postwar boom.

Now that U.S. servicemen and women are returning home from active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, providing these kinds of benefits continues to be essential. I've cosponsored H.R. 2131, the "New GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century Act," to ensure that the newest generation of veterans receives the assistance they deserve. Its provisions include increasing VA health funding, blocking fee hikes, covering mental health services, repealing the Disabled Veterans' Tax, providing a \$1,000 bonus for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and providing full tuition and fees plus a living allowance for 36 months of schooling for those who enlist for four years of active duty military service.

## Fighting for health care benefits

Thousands of young men and women in uniform are putting their lives on hold and on the line by serving our country. We owe it to them to help them with their health care needs upon their return. I've cosponsored H.R.

515, the "Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2005," which will make veterans a priority by ensuring their health care through



>> After speaking on veterans issues, Congresswoman Maloney joins veterans aboard the USS Intrepid for Veterans Day, many of whom were the first to serve aboard the Intrepid.

mandatory funding. This legislation would create a guaranteed funding stream for veterans' health care, improve access to health care, and improve funding for special VA programs such as post-traumatic stress disorder treatment, blind rehabilitation, spinal cord injury centers, homelessness, psychosocial rehabilitation and long-term care.

## Every veteran has a story

There are 24 million veterans in the U.S. and every one has a story. Some funny, some sad, each important. Now, every vet can *record* that story for posterity.

The Veterans' History Project at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress collects and preserves audio and video recorded oral histories submitted by U.S. war veterans.

You can take part by contacting the Project at (202) 707-4916 or visiting the Veterans History Project website at [www.loc.gov/folklife/vets](http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets).

## Military funeral arrangements

The rendering of military funeral honors is the final demonstration of a nation's gratitude to those who have defended the country during times of both war and peace. If requested by an eligible veteran's family, an honor

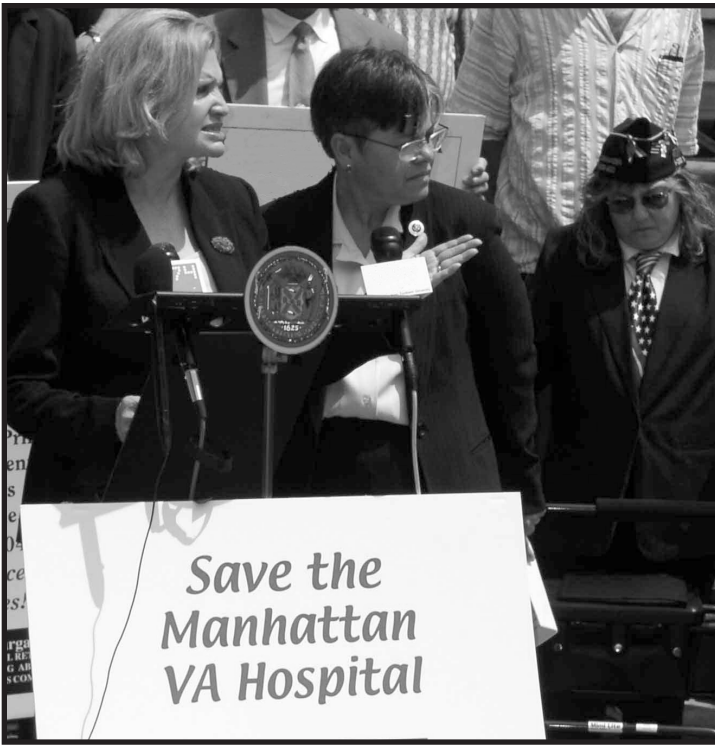
guard detail can be provided which will perform a ceremony that includes the folding and presenting of the American flag to the next of kin and the playing of "Taps."

Families of eligible veterans must request funeral honors through their funeral director, who contacts the appropriate service branch to arrange for the honor detail. For more information about this service visit the Department of Defense's Military Funeral Honors website at [www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil](http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil).

## 9/11 Guard 'vets' deserve fair benefits

Several hundred National Guard members served in disaster zones after 9/11 and are not receiving military retirement credit for that service, because they were activated under state duty rather than federal active duty.

Along with Congressman Peter King (R-NY) and other members of the New York delegation, I



>> Maloney speaks on the importance of the Manhattan Veterans Hospital to New York veterans.

introduced legislation to make these soldiers' service eligible to earn federal military retirement credit, and the bill was included in the House-passed version of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006.

Clearly, all National Guard troops who served during the unprecedented domestic emergency following 9/11 should be commended, and I hope the Senate will finish the job of codifying the fair treatment for those who served in New York City and Washington, D.C.

### Protecting Manhattan's VA Hospital in Kips Bay

The Manhattan VA Hospital provides indispensable health services to veterans in the New York region. Sadly, instead of *strengthening* the hospital, the Department of Veterans Affairs is studying the consolidation of the

Brooklyn and Manhattan VA Hospitals, which could result in dismantling one or both of these outstanding institutions and a loss of access to high quality health care for thousands of local veterans.

On May 31, 2005, I urged Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson to preserve the Manhattan VA Hospital and to ensure that any study of the hospital's future is conducted fairly with the full input of New York veterans.

I also have requested public hearings in

Manhattan (in addition to Brooklyn) so more veterans can participate in the process—a request the VA agreed to.

In May, during testimony before the Local Advisory Panel designated by the Bush administration to monitor the study, I emphasized that if the Manhattan VA Hospital is closed, some veterans will be unable to travel to the Brooklyn facility, and many areas of specialty care will be lost or greatly diminished. Most recently, at a September public hearing, I challenged the study's focus on yielding the highest land sale price, at the expense of quality of care and access to care.

We need to strengthen both hospitals, not cut back on services or make health care harder to obtain. It's important to stand with New York veterans to fight the dismantling of New York veterans hospitals.

### Veterans legislation roundup

The 109th Congress is still in its first year, but already it has been a busy legislative season for issues important to veterans and their families. Here are a few measures to assist veterans that I have cosponsored:

H.R. 808, the "Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act," which repeals, as of the later of October 1, 2005, or the date of enactment of this Act, certain provisions which require the offset of amounts paid in dependency and indemnity compensation from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities for the surviving spouses of former military personnel who are entitled to military pay or who would be entitled to retired pay except for being under 60 years of age.

H.R. 591, which directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, for purposes of eligibility for veterans' disability compensation and benefits, to accept the sworn affidavit of a veteran who served on or before July 27, 1953, as proof of a service connection of a disease or injury alleged to have been incurred in or aggravated by such service, if there is no clear and convincing evidence to the contrary.

H.R. 23, the "Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2005," which directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pay a monthly benefit of \$1,000 to certain honorably-discharged veterans of the U.S. Merchant Marine who served between December 7, 1941, and December 31, 1946 (or to their survivors).



Washington, DC 20515  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

M.C.  
PRSRT-STD

*Carolyn B. Maloney*

### Useful contacts for Veterans and dependents

It's sometimes hard to find the right place to call to solve a specific problem. If the numbers below don't solve your problem, please contact one of my offices for additional help!

- VA Benefits 1-800-827-1000
- Health Benefits 1-877-222-8387
- Education Benefits 1-888-442-4551
- Life Insurance 1-800-669-8477
- Debt Management 1-800-827-0648
- Mammography Hotline 1-888-492-7844
- Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) 1-800-829-4833
- CHAMPVA 1-800-733-8387
- Headstones and Markers 1-800-697-6947
- Special Health Issues: Gulf War, Agent Orange, Project 112/Shad 1-800-749-8387
- Queens Veteran Counseling 1-718-296-2871
- VA NY Harbor Health Care 1-212-686-7500
- Health Eligibility Center 1-404-235-1257 or 1-800-929-8387  
2957 Clairmont Rd. #200  
Atlanta GA 30329

### Problem or solution, I want to hear from you!

As your representative in Congress, it's important to me to ensure that federal agencies are appropriately responsive to your needs. If you've applied for a federal benefit and believe your application is not being processed

properly, or if you are having any other problems with a federal agency, my district staff may be able to help.

Please don't hesitate to call or write me or my staff to ask for assistance. If you'd like to visit with a staff member, it's always best to call first for an appointment. Here's how to reach me...

#### Manhattan:

1651 Third Ave., Suite 311,  
New York, NY 10128  
212/860-0606

#### Queens:

28-11 Astoria Blvd.,  
Astoria, NY 11102  
718/932-1804

#### Washington, D.C.:

2331 Rayburn HOB,  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
202/225-7944

I'm also always interested in any suggestions and recommendations you may have regarding legislation. Many of my best initiatives originate with ideas brought to me by constituents!

*Carolyn*