

# N.M. VETERANS NEWSLETTER

U.S. SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FOR NEW MEXICO'S VETERANS



FALL 2017



# DEAR FRIEND,

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Few sacrifices are as selfless as those our military service men and women make in defense of our country. The tradition of answering the call of duty runs deep in New Mexico's history.

One of my most important responsibilities as your U.S. Senator is to keep America's promise to our veterans. Whether you are experiencing trouble filing a claim, receiving your benefits, accessing health benefits, appealing an outcome, or you are a beneficiary of a veteran, my office can help contact the appropriate U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs office on your behalf.

We must be unwavering in our commitment to our men and women in uniform who deserve more than just words of gratitude for their sacrifice when they return home. They deserve the quality care and benefits that they were promised.

Thank you for your immeasurable service to our nation. Please continue to keep me informed of the issues important to you and the ways we in Congress can do more for New Mexico's veterans.

Sincerely,



MARTIN HEINRICH  
United States Senator

# CONSTITUENT SERVICES

## ENSURING VETERANS RECEIVE WHAT THEY HAVE EARNED:

My office has managed over 1,700 veteran cases. This intervention has resulted in a local, indirect, economic impact of more than \$1.6 million for New Mexico.



## COL. ROBERT J. FATE BRONZE STAR RECIPIENT

In May, I had the honor of holding a medal ceremony at the New Mexico Veterans Memorial in Albuquerque to posthumously recognize Colonel Robert J. Fate, who was recommended for, but never received, a Bronze Star Medal for performing meritorious service during World War II. My office worked with Col. Fate's family to resolve the Army paperwork issue to finally attain the service medal.



# SECURING THE VETERAN'S CHOICE PROGRAM

## VETERAN'S AFFAIRS CHOICE AND QUALITY EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 2017

Three years ago, as part of my ongoing effort to help all New Mexico Veterans access quality health care, I supported the creation of the Veterans Choice Program (VCP). Last year, I traveled throughout New Mexico and co-hosted information sessions to hear feedback from veterans and stakeholders about their experiences with the VCP. This summer, I voted for the Veteran's Affairs Choice and Quality Employment Act, which was signed into law on August 12, 2017. This law will provide \$2.1 billion to continue funding and improve the VCP. The new law will also provide the VA with \$1.8 billion to hire new health care workers and lease new clinics.

# HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

## MY OFFICE CAN HELP WITH:

- VA Claims
- Military Records
- Replacement Medals
- GI Bill Benefits
- VA Home Loans
- VA Health Benefits
- Survivor's Benefits

## TO START A CASE WITH MY OFFICE:

Call My Office At  
(505) 346-6601 or fill  
out the Privacy Release  
Form on my Website:  
[Heinrich.Senate.Gov](http://Heinrich.Senate.Gov)



As your United States Senator, I am committed to keeping America's promise to our heroic veterans and their families so that when our troops return home, they receive the benefits they have earned. You can also seek assistance if you are experiencing difficulties with your claim.

Even though I cannot guarantee a specific outcome, I will ensure that your case is reviewed fairly, thoroughly, and in a timely manner.

- U.S. SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH

# SUPPORTING VETERANS

## STRENGTHENING G.I. BENEFITS

HARRY W. COLMERY VETERANS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT of 2017

Since it was approved just weeks after D-Day, the original G.I. Bill has made a tremendous impact on our nation's heroes and their families – and helped build America's post-war economy. We owe it to this generation of service members to provide those same educational benefits and opportunities that they too have earned. I was an original cosponsor of this bill to modernize the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, which was signed into law in August. The new law puts an end to the arbitrary 15-year period that a veteran is required to use their G.I. Bill so they can use their benefits at any time in their professional career. It also makes much-needed updates for reservists, Purple Heart recipients, veterans, and surviving family members who face school closures.

## AMERICAN LEGION

AMERICAN LEGION 100TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE COIN ACT of 2017

I am proud to honor the 100th anniversary of the American Legion by cosponsoring legislation to create a variety of commemorative coins. The special, limited edition commemorative coins would be available for purchase starting in 2019, marking the centennial of the organization. The Legion has been instrumental in providing support, programs, and advocacy for New Mexico veterans. Proceeds from the sale of the commemorative coins will go toward supporting American Legion programs and efforts to continue their invaluable work on behalf of our nation's veterans and their families.

## IMPROVING THE APPEALS PROCESS

VETERANS APPEALS IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION ACT of 2017

My Action: Cosponsored Legislation  
Signed into Law: August 2017

THE LAW CREATES 3 APPEALS "LANES":

- Local Higher Level Review Lane allows adjudicators to review the same evidence presented in the initial claim.
- New Evidence Lane allows veterans to submit new evidence and have a hearing.
- Board Lane allows veterans to appeal directly to the Board of Veterans Appeals.

## PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT OF 2017

My Action: Voted YES  
Signed Into Law: June 2017

This law protects whistleblowers and makes it easier for the VA to remove senior executives. It also increases accountability for all employees at the VA.

**U.S. SENATOR MARTIN HEINRICH**

**HEINRICH.SENATE.GOV**

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