

“Already, in the first eight months of the 110th Congress, the new majority has followed through with our pledge to honor the nation’s commitment to our veterans,”

stated Rep.

Hoyer

. “For the first time in years the Congress has provided the VA with the requisite funding to fulfill our nation’s obligation to America’s servicemen and women, their families, and our veterans. These proud men and women to which we owe so much have fulfilled their duties bravely and honorably, and they deserve nothing less than the support of a nation that recognizes the heroic deeds they have undertaken to protect and promote the freedoms all Americans enjoy.”

This year, Congress has provided the Department of Veterans Affairs with a landmark increase for veterans’ programs after years of inadequate funding, including the largest health care increase in the 77-year history of the VA as an independent agency. At the time of its passage, Hoyer hailed the bill as “one of the best veterans’ bills to ever come through the House.” Aside from sufficiently funding the VA for the first time in years, the House has passed numerous pieces of legislation to better serve and meet the needs of America’s veterans.

“We call our veterans ‘heroes’ for a reason, and the heroes from past wars deserve all the care and dignity that this nation can bestow,” **stated Chairman Filner**. “Members of the House have routinely come together in this Congress to send a clear message to America’s servicemen and women that we recognize the sacrifices of our veterans. We will continue to

work boldly and tirelessly to meet the needs of all our veterans and their families.”

In addition to the legislative update, Rep. Hoyer honored veteran Ronald Drinks of Mechanicsville with a presentation of medals he earned for his brave service during active duty in the Vietnam War. Mr. Drinks worked with Rep. Hoyer’s office to obtain the following medals from the National Personnel Records Service: Army Good Conduct; Vietnam Service Medal with three Bronze Service Stars; Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon with Device (1960); National Defense Service Medal; and the Expert Badge with Rifle Bar.

“Mr. Drinks served this country valiantly during a grueling military campaign in Vietnam,” **stated Rep. Hoyer.** “I am honored today to personally present him with these medals of valor, which are tribute to his brave service to our nation.”

Veterans also received a presentation on the

Veterans History Project, a mission of the Library of Congress aimed at collecting oral history interviews, memoirs, letters, diaries, photographs, and other original materials from veterans of our nation's foreign wars. The Project was created with legislation sponsored by Rep. Hoyer.

The bill also includes an increase of \$6.7 billion for veterans' care over last year - \$3.6 billion over the Administration's request for veterans' programs. At present, the VA health system is not adequately prepared to care for those returning from combat, and nearly 400,000 veterans are faced with unreasonable waiting times for claims processing. The House-Senate appropriations bill represents an historic investment in veterans' care to address significant shortfalls in medical treatment, claims processing personnel, and facility improvements.

“Hundreds of thousands of members of the military have served their country in Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001. But even as their service reminds our nation of the great debt we owe to our veterans, we are falling short on our promise to honor these brave Americans,” **stat ed Rep. Hoyer.**

“This bill provides for our nation’s veterans, the defenders of our great country who we are obligated to honor with a commitment equal to the sacrifices they have made. As we prepare to commemorate Veterans Day this coming Monday, I urge the President sign this important legislation.”