

# ***Veterans Legislative Monitor***

***Congressman Jim Nussle***

***Manchester, Iowa***

Summer 2004

## ***Jim Nussle's Agenda for Iowa...***

*Protect our Nation  
with Homeland  
Security*

*Strengthen the  
Family Farm*

*Fair Taxation &  
Responsible Budgets*

*Long-term  
Energy Strategies*

*Retirement Security  
for All Iowans*

*Strengthen Medicare  
& Ensure Health  
Care Access*

*Student-centered  
Education with  
Local Control*

***Keep Promises  
Made to Our  
Nation's Veterans***

*Grow Our Economy  
to Create Jobs*

## **Nussle Agenda to Keep Promises to Our Nation's Veterans**

*"The sacrifices made by the American men and women who put on military uniforms and agreed to defend and protect our nation's freedoms must never be forgotten by the government or by their fellow citizens. The promises made to these veterans must be promises that are kept. I will continue supporting legislative initiatives that aim to make their lives better, such as protection and improvement of veterans' benefits and improved health care."*

**Jim Nussle**

**Jim is working to achieve a positive legislative agenda for Iowa's veterans. Jim has worked on Iowa's veteran priorities since coming to Congress and will continue his work on these priorities in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress.**

**After countless meetings with Iowa veterans, as well as through letters, e-mails and phone calls from veterans, he has created the following goals.**

### **Goals to Keep Our Nation's Promise to Our Veterans:**

1. Ensure Timely Access to Health Benefits in Iowa
2. Ensure Timely and Accurate Responses to Veterans' Concerns
3. Ensure Access to Disability Benefits
4. Improve Education Benefits
5. Meet the Challenges of America's Newest Veterans
6. Fully Fund Concurrent Receipts for the Most Disabled Veterans

**To achieve the goals to help keep our nation's promise to our veterans, Jim has sponsored and co-sponsored many pieces of legislation, and as the House Budget Committee Chairman, he has written many veterans' items into his budget. You will find a listing of these items on the following pages.**

***www.nussle.house.gov***

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**Nussle's Veterans Agenda Legislation:****FY2005 Budget Resolution (S.Con. Res. 95)*****Keeps Promises to Veterans***

- Provides \$30.7 billion for veterans discretionary spending including veterans medical care.
- Contains a special reserve fund to address the treatment of survivor benefits under the Survivor Benefit Program (SBP).
- Since 1995, total spending on veterans has increased from \$38 billion to \$60 billion, a 58 percent increase.
- ***Constructed by Rep. Nussle, approved by the House of Representatives on May 19, 2004.***

**National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (H.R. 4200)**

- **Survivor Benefit Program:** Eliminates the current offset for social security phasing current annuities up from 35 percent to 55 percent by 2008.
- ***Approved by the House of Representatives on May 20, 2004. Approved by the Senate on June 23, 2004. A conference committee is pending.***

**National Defense Authorization for Fiscal Year 2004 (H.R. 1588)**

- **Concurrent Receipt:** Extends full concurrent receipt in 2004 to all military retirees with a combat-related disability including members who served in the National Guard or military reserves. Provides full concurrent receipt to be phased in over the next 10 years for military retirees with a disability ranking of 50% and above.
- ***Approved by the Congress on November 12, 2003. Signed into law by the President on November 24, 2003.***

**Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES)**

- Draft plan calls for more than \$49 million to improve health care facilities in Iowa, including expansion of specialty care at Iowa City VA hospital and several new community-based outpatient clinics throughout the state.
- **Number of wait listed patients in the VA Midwest Health Care Network has been reduced from 19,390 in June 2002 to 930 in 2003.**

**Rock Island Arsenal**

- Letters to Department of Defense and Congressional Appropriations Committees to ensure the safety and victory of tomorrow's veterans by pushing for new and improved defense programs at the Rock Island Arsenal, including a new mortar system for the Marines and more cost-efficient practices to ensure the continued viability of the Arsenal, a major employer.
- ***Army response confirms continuation of past commitments to the Arsenal.***

**Appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year (FY) 2004 (H.R. 2673)**

- Provides \$28.6 billion for the Veterans Health Administration, a \$1.57 billion increase, includes funding for Medical facilities, research and administration.
- ***Approved by the Congress on January 22, 2004. Signed into law by the President on January 23, 2004.***

**Medication and Pharmacies (H.R. 709)**

- Allows veterans to have prescriptions written by their personal physicians to be filled by VA pharmacies.
- ***Co-sponsored by Rep. Nussle, pending in the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.***

**Flag Desecration Amendment (H. J. Res. 4)**

- Proposes an amendment to the Constitution authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the U.S. flag.
- *Co-sponsored by Rep. Nussle.*
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on June 3, 2003.*

**Veterans Benefits Act (H.R. 2297)**

- Improves and expands numerous benefits for veterans.
- Expands vocational training opportunities, increases auto allowance, increases specially adapted housing grants for severely disabled veterans, and reinstates the VA vendee loan program.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on October 8, 2003.*

**Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act (H.R. 1720)**

- Authorizes \$1.4 billion for much needed improvements to VA medical facilities.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on October 29, 2003.*

**Veterans Entrepreneurship and Benefits Improvement Act (H.R. 1460)**

- Provides disabled veterans with assistance in starting and growing small businesses.
- Allows veterans to use education benefits to enroll in courses offered by small business development centers and other approved institutions.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on June 24, 2003.*

**Veterans Health Care Improvement Act (H.R. 2357)**

- Directs the VA to appoint chiropractors to the Veterans Health Administration.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on July 21, 2003.*

**Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act (H.R. 1683)**

- Increases service-connected compensation benefits, dependency and the indemnity compensation benefits to deceased family members for FY2004.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on May 22, 2003.*

**Veterans' Outpatient Care Access Act**

- Directs the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to provide needed medical services from sources outside the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) when veterans are informed that the waiting period for such services in a VA clinic will be six months or longer. Basically, if a veteran tries to get a doctor's appointment at a VA clinic and has to wait longer than six months, the VA would be required to provide healthcare outside of the VA clinic.
- *Co-sponsored by Rep. Nussle in the 107th Congress.*

**World War II Memorial**

- Authorized by Congress in 2001.
- *Dedication ceremony to be held on Memorial Day 2004.*