



Military Report

Summer 2004

Dear Friend,

I made a pledge to U.S. troops, including the thousands of National Guard and Reservists from Arkansas, to stand in the gap and intercede for them and their families while they are away fighting to bring stability and democracy to the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a promise I intend to keep.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have worked very hard to assist our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. American soldiers and our allies are facing daunting challenges in an environment of heavy casualties and suicide bombings. Yet our soldiers have persevered and have shown why they are the greatest military in the world. I pray that the Iraqi and Afghan people through our assistance will attain peace and stability in their countries.

In the meantime, we must provide our military with the resources, training, technology and equipment they need to safely and successfully perform their missions, both now and in the future. I believe Arkansas' military installations and research institutions are critical in helping our Armed Services achieve their goals. This is why I fought hard to secure significant funding for them in the Fiscal Year 2005 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, including earmarks for equipment upgrades at the Pine Bluff Arsenal, new technology for the Arkansas National Guard and research and development funding for UofA and ASU. I have also used my seat on the Committee to improve the financial condition of military families and to expand health care benefits for those currently serving and for our veterans.

We must continue our vigilance in fighting the war on terrorism at home as well. This means ensuring troops in Afghanistan have our full support so they can put an end to al Queda's terror tactics and network. It means providing first responders with adequate resources to prevent and respond to a terrorist attack. It also means providing our nation's law enforcement agencies with the tools necessary to keep our cities and borders safe. Finally, it means improving our nation's intelligence by giving full consideration to the 9/11 Commission's recommendations and acting on them in a bipartisan and responsible manner.

This newsletter is intended to help keep you informed about my work on defense-related matters. I welcome your input and the opportunity to serve you in the future.



Senator Pryor talks with members of the 39th in Fort Hood, TX about their training and operations in Iraq.

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Sincerely,

Mark Pryor
U.S. Senator

On Recognizing the Sacrifice of our Wounded Troops

Our men and women in uniform risk life and limb to uphold democracy and freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan, including more than 3,500 soldiers who can not return to action because of severe and debilitating injuries. It is only fair to ensure these individuals are receiving the medical care and support during their times of need.

That is why I am working to fill the communication gap that often exists between wounded soldiers and their families back home. The urgency of this matter was brought to my attention when Specialist Henry Austin Phillips, a member of the 39th Brigade lost a leg from a grenade attack in Iraq. Before being evacuated to Landstuhl Hospital in Germany, he called his wife, Pam, to deliver the news about his injury and ask her to join him in Germany. Following this conversation, Specialist Phillips was put under sedation as a result of his extensive injuries.

Specialist Phillips' wife, Pam, received no additional information regarding her husband, and his family contacted my office to help track him down. After several days, we located him in Germany and learned he was to fly the next day to Walter Reed Hospital to recover from multiple surgeries.

The Phillips family is not alone in experiencing what felt like a black hole of communication. For this reason, I introduced the Service Act for Care and Relief Initiatives for Forces Injured in Combat Engagements, or the SACRIFICE Act, which I am pleased to report is now part of the Senate-passed version of the Fiscal Year 2005 Defense Authorization Act.



Senator Pryor shares good news with members of the 188th Fighter Wing about federal funding he helped secure for construction of an Aerospace & Maintenance Complex.



Senator Pryor meets with Specialist Phillips and Pam to discuss the SACRIFICE Act.

The SACRIFICE Act recognizes the American military personnel killed and injured in combat and the heroic efforts of our medical teams. In doing so, an important component of the legislation establishes a tracking system for wounded personnel being transported out of a combat zone. I believe a uniform tracking system will provide timely responses and more reliable information to families seeking information regarding where their loved ones are being sent for treatment and the prognosis of injuries.

My bill further aims to reduce fatalities and disability rates by authorizing additional funds in order to provide medics with a more modern and sterile environment in which to treat patients. Our military medical teams struggle everyday to provide the swift, expert treatment that is required for those injured in combat. Providing them with the best medical equipment and training is the greatest investment we can make right now.

No family should have to endure the anxiety and confusion the Phillips' faced, and it is among my top priorities to fill in these communication gaps and to also provide our medical teams with the very best medical equipment available.



Pryor Fights for Better Benefits for Military Personnel

Pryor Introduces Military Compensation Bill. Concerned about the financial well-being of our military families, I asked the Government Accounting Office (GAO) to complete a study of the tax treatment of military personnel and make recommendations on how the tax code could improve the financial condition of military personnel. I requested GAO to consider military salaries, as well as health care, housing, pension, education, disability and all other employment benefits.

The GAO study revealed many lower-income-earning military personnel who receive tax exclusions for serving in combat zones are forced to forfeit other tax advantages, including the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). This discrepancy affects as many as 10,000 soldiers and costs them approximately \$3,200 to \$4,500 in tax benefits.

To correct this problem, I, along with Senator Max Baucus, Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, introduced the Tax Relief for Americans in Combat Act, or the TRAC Act. This bill will allow military personnel to continue receiving their combat pay exclusions and take full advantage of other tax credits. I am committed to advancing this legislation forward so that our troops are treated fairly under the tax code.

Pryor Fights for Better TRICARE Benefits. An estimated 20 percent of National Guard personnel lack health coverage when they are not on active duty. I believe TRICARE health coverage should be available for Guard members and reservists regardless of their deployment status. Congress passed this option as a pilot program last year. I have been working hard in committee on a provision to make this benefit permanent and am pleased it is now pending as part of the Senate's Fiscal Year 2005 Department of Defense Appropriations Act.

Pryor Pushes for Airfare Reimbursement for Soldiers. Military personnel serving 12-month tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan are entitled to a short period of Rest and Recreation (R&R). A number of Arkansas military personnel contacted me when they were forced to pay for their own travel beyond a "hub" airport in order to get home for the holidays. Funding for R&R travel within the U.S. has since been authorized by Congress. In addition, I am pleased legislation I cosponsored, that would reimburse members for travel expenses before that policy was established, has been signed into law.

Pryor Champions Concurrent Receipt. For decades, military retirees have watched their service annuities reduced because they received VA compensation for service-connected disabilities. I cosponsored legislation to allow disabled military retirees to collect both their retirement and disability pensions, otherwise known as concurrent receipt. Last year, we were able to ease the ban on concurrent receipt, but I am especially proud of Senate efforts this year to restore full retired pay to retirees who are 100 percent disabled. As a Senate conferee, I will stand up for our retirees to keep this provision in the final Fiscal Year 2005 Defense Authorization Bill.



Senator Pryor chats with veterans about improving health care and pension benefits.

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Pryor Secures Millions to Keep Arkansas' Defense Installations Strong

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I was able to help secure funding, above and beyond the President's budget request, to help our state's military installations, defense companies and research institutions remain at the forefront in advancing the capabilities of our Armed Forces. The following is a partial list of projects included in the Fiscal Year 2005 Defense Appropriations Bill, which was signed into law on August 5, 2004.

- **Arkansas National Guard:** Up to \$2.6 million to procure the next generation of artillery meteorological system; a share of up to \$10.5 million to procure M-22 Automatic Chemical Agent Alarms to assist in homeland security missions.
- **UofA:** \$2 million for nanotechnology research to improve electronics capabilities on the digital battlefield; \$1 million for The Logistics Institute to enhance logistics and improve design of weapons systems; \$2 million to support a joint research program to improve radio communications equipment.
- **ASU:** \$10.5 million for a joint project to develop smart technologies, called Standoff Sensor for Radionuclide ID, to detect WMDs; \$1.5 million in conjunction with industry to continue research on early detection of WMDs.
- **Highland Park:** \$5 million for Aerojet to make upgrades to Standard Missiles; up to \$12.75 million for Lockheed Martin to maintain engineering and manufacturing expertise on the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS), and to increase the system's acquisition and production rate.
- **Pine Bluff Arsenal:** Up to \$2.37 million to modernize data processing equipment; Up to \$6.75 million for ammunition, mortars, protective masks and other equipment.
- **Future Medical Shelter System:** \$5.3 million to develop the EADS prototype for medical shelters, with expectations that it will be developed in Russellville, AR.
- **Vanadium Technology:** \$3 million for a Hot Springs company to apply high-performance steels in Army applications.
- **Visions Technology:** \$2 million to build a machinery control surveillance system for use aboard gas turbine ships, which will be built in Rogers, AR.
- **Space Photonics:** \$3 million for the Fayetteville-based company to help the Air Force further develop space communications capabilities.

Countless corporations and organizations have donated their time, services, and money to help U.S. servicemen and women serving abroad. If you are looking to provide support to our military families, the following suggestions are just a few ways to help.

Help a soldier call home. The Department of Defense Military Exchange sells prepaid phone cards to those who wish to buy them for troops serving overseas. For more information, visit <https://thor.aafes.com/scs/default.aspx>.

Help meet a soldier's needs. The Department of Defense (DoD) website lists several organizations for individuals who want to support our troops, which range from helping to build specially-equipped homes for disabled soldiers, donating frequent flyer miles to sending a soldier a gift certificate to use at DoD Military Exchanges worldwide. Find out more by visiting http://www.defendamerica.mil/support_troops.html.

Send a care package. FirstGov.gov offers links to various online government services where you can send everything from deodorant to board games to troops overseas. For more information, visit <http://www.firstgov.gov/Topics/Usgrresponse/Help.shtml#support>.

