

May 12, 2004

## SCHAKOWSKY JOINS COLLEAGUES TO HONOR WWII VETERANS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the brave men and women who served our nation during World War II and to wholeheartedly support H.Res. 409. The National World War II (WWII) Memorial will be officially dedicated on May 29 to honor the 16,000,000 veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces during WWII and the millions of Americans who supported the war effort on the home front. Even today, we deeply appreciate the great service and sacrifice that those men and women gave in defense of our nation and the world.

The soldiers of WWII fought against an unimaginable tyranny. They gave their blood, sweat, tears, and for many, their lives, to protect and preserve the American way of life. Veterans who served our country in WWII deserve a tribute to illustrate their valor and courage. The National WWII Memorial is a fitting and lasting tribute and only a down-payment on a debt we can never repay in full.

But to truly honor this nation's Greatest Generation, we must do more than just offer kind words and lasting memorials. It's time for Congress to live up to its promise to care for their health and well-being. It is time that we start adequately funding our veterans' health care system.

Today, only 1 in 4 WWII veterans are still surviving. Every day, 1,100 more die. Those surviving veterans are aging and their medical needs are increasing. It is a great dishonor to turn our back on those veterans; it is a great dishonor to make those men and women wait for needed health care and an even greater dishonor to turn them away from Veterans Administration facilities.

There is a growing crisis in veterans' medical care: more than 30,000 veterans are waiting six months or more for an appointment at Veterans Administration hospitals. Some are even dying before they see a doctor. In his FY05 budget, the President recommended a less than 2% increase in funding for veterans' medical care-not even enough to cover the cost of inflation. The President's budget also slashes \$294 million in funding for long-term care for America's veterans, which will reduce the number of patients treated by more than 8,000. That is not acceptable.

**While the House-passed budget does provide \$1.2 billion dollars above the President's wholly inadequate budget request, it is still \$1.3 billion below the amount of funding suggested on a bipartisan basis by the House Veterans Affairs Committee and \$2 billion below the amount recommended by the Independent Budget. The House-passed budget will not give the VA the resources it needs to reduce the backlog of patients or improve the quality of care. It will not end the Survivor Benefit Penalty or end the disability tax for the 2/3 of disabled veterans whose pension and disability payments are still offset. It will not give our WWII veterans the care they deserve. Democrats have offered a plan that will give veteran's the care they deserve.**

**I urge my Colleagues to join me in honoring the sacrifice of World War II veterans by voting for this resolution. I also urge us to further honor those brave men and women by committing enough funding to meet their needs.**