

Most of my efforts on Capitol Hill are focused on reducing the federal government's size and scope, but I make an exception for a very important group of people. Our nation's men and women in uniform commit a selfless act of patriotism when they take up arms in defense of our country. As a veteran myself, I salute all those currently serving, or who have served in our armed forces. Our nation owes them a debt of gratitude for their sacrifices, their courage, their time away from friends and family, and the dangers they undertake. This Memorial Day we honor our soldiers and vets, we remember those who never came home, or who have since passed on. Above all, we acknowledge our respect for all who have served in the military. Congress has considered several bills this past week that would affect veterans. Many of the measures are very positive. I applaud efforts to shore up health care for veterans, and make sure that veterans know about the services available to them. I strongly support improving educational opportunities for veterans. I also believe a pay raise is well-deserved, and long overdue for our men and women in uniform. These benefits constitute their pay for serving our country. What I do not support is inserting immoral, unconstitutional provisions into veterans' bills. For example, HR 6081 the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act, in addition to providing important tax benefits for soldiers, sends the IRS after civilians who move overseas. This method of funding is actually a slap in the face to our soldiers who vow to keep us free. After all, how free are we, if we are not really free to leave? Congress should not use the military as an excuse to behave tyrannically. I was pleased with several of the veterans bills passed this past week, but more needs to be done. There are many other bills that should be passed dealing with veterans health care, how we treat disabled vets, and forgiving debts to the United States of fallen soldiers. We need to keep in mind younger generations who will someday face the choice of whether or not to enlist. They are watching to see how well we keep our promises. As it stands, our military is being rapidly depleted and exhausted by the continued, unconstitutional wars being fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. This problem must be addressed. This Memorial Day, I thank all our soldiers who have fought so bravely for our country. I will continue to work hard in Congress to ensure they are treated with dignity, and receive the compensations they have been promised and deserve. They have given their best for this nation, and we should respond in kind.