



# PRESS RELEASE

## House Armed Services Committee

### Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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#### **KEEPING FAITH WITH AMERICA'S VETERANS**

#### ***Congress Delivers Permanent, Lifetime Health Care Benefit***

Today, U.S. Representative Floyd Spence, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, announced that Congress has answered the call of veterans by delivering on the promises of health care for life to our nation's military retirees.

"This is a huge win for military retirees," said Spence. "Health care for service members and their families is a major component of the military benefits package. The Administration had promised to include significant health care improvements for service members and military retirees in their budget proposal, but failed to deliver. I am extremely proud to say that the House-Senate conference committee accepted the challenge and provided permanent lifetime health care to America's military retirees and their eligible family members."

The revised program will take effect beginning in fiscal year 2002 and is open to military retirees and their eligible family members. Under the plan, beneficiaries could keep their current Medicare provider and use TRICARE as their Medicare supplement paying any costs not covered by Medicare. Beneficiaries would pay no co-pays or deductibles. The plan also includes no enrollment fees or premiums for all Medicare eligible beneficiaries. The agreement also reduces the maximum out of pocket expenses for all military retirees by sixty percent, from \$7,500 to \$3,000.

In addition to the permanent TRICARE for Life initiative, the conference committee also approved and strengthened several military health care proposals adopted by the House and Senate earlier this year. To support these recommendations, the conference committee added \$178.6 million to President Clinton's request for the Defense Health Program.

#### Summary of major provisions:

- Expansion of DOD's mail order and retail pharmacy programs to allow participation by all beneficiaries;
- Major improvements in the TRICARE program;
- One year extension of the demonstration program "TRICARE Senior Prime" (also known as Medicare subvention); and
- Establishment of Departments of Defense and Veterans' Affairs cooperative programs to ensure patients are getting the right care and the right medicines.

A complete summary of health care provisions, as well as a summary of all of the major provisions, in the defense authorization bill can be found at: <http://www.house.gov/hasc/>.

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