



Can Americans trust George W. Bush to take care of our veterans?



"Many of our troops are listening tonight. And I want you and your families to know...my administration, and this Congress, will give you the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror."
—George W. Bush, [State of the Union Address](#) 1/21/04

That's what Bush says. But, that's NOT what he does.

◆ Sends Our Military Men and Women to Iraq with antiquated, substandard flak jackets.

- Bush's is sending our military equipped to Iraq with antiquated, substandard flak jackets. "Parents were buying flak jackets and sending them to sons and daughters in Iraq because soldiers were using outdated vests. To this day, thousands of men and women still don't have Interceptor vests, a high-tech model that has saved the lives of soldiers shot in the chest with AK-47 bullets."

"It's shocking," says George Washington Law School professor Jonathan Turley, who exposed the shortage of high-grade flak jackets more than two months ago in an [October] opinion piece for The [Los Angeles] Times. Since then, Turley has been under siege, having lost count of the number of private citizens offering money for the purchase of vests the military has failed to provide." ["Troops Pay Price As Military Skimps" [Los Angeles Times](#) 12/7/03]

◆ Tried to Cut Combat Pay for Troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Bush's White House tried to cut the combat pay of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan but had to backpedal due to public outrage. "The Pentagon's support for the idea of rolling back "imminent danger pay" by \$75 a month and "family separation allowances" for the American forces by \$150 a month collapsed after a story in *The Chronicle* Thursday generated intense criticism from military families, veterans groups and Democratic candidates seeking to unseat President Bush in 2004." ["Troops in danger zone no longer face pay cut" [San Francisco Chronicle](#) 8/15/03]

◆ Photo Ops As Sick, Wounded Troops Wait Months for Medical Care.

- While President Bush has photo ops at Walter Reed Hospital, "[h]undreds of sick and wounded U.S. soldiers including many who served in the Iraq war are languishing in hot cement barracks here while they wait—sometimes for months—to see doctors." ["Sick, wounded U.S. troops held in squalor" [UPI](#) 10/17/03]

◆ Opposed National Guard and Reserves Access to Military Health Insurance.

- "The Bush Administration formally opposed giving members of the National Guard and Reserves access to the U.S. military's health insurance system. ... A recent General Accounting Office report estimated that one out of five Guard members has no health insurance." ["Health plan for Guard opposed" [Gannett News Service /The Olypian](#) 10/23/03]

◆ Opposed \$1.3 billion for veterans emergency health care funding.

- The Bush Administration actively opposed \$1.3 billion in funding for emergency health care funding for veterans in the 2004 budget. (It passed over the president's objections.) Steve Robertson, legislative director for the American Legion said "Democrats have ... supported the veterans' concerned at a much louder rate than Republicans." [Democrats fight for veterans' votes, [Detroit News](#), 12/27/03]

"The President is committed to taking good care of our military personnel and their families."

www.georgewbush.com

◆ Proposed Rules to Cut Veterans Lifetime Healthcare Benefits.

- Bush proposed reducing veterans' guaranteed lifetime healthcare benefits to two years only. Moreover, Bush's proposed increasing out-of-pocket costs of co-payments for outpatient care and prescription drugs and included a \$250 yearly enrollment fee. ["Veterans' care squeezed by VA" [Cincinnati Enquirer](#), 5/25/03]

◆ Proposed Tripling Veterans Co-Pay on Drug Benefits.

- The Bush Administration proposed tripling veterans' co-pay on drug benefits. "[R]etirees may be asked to pay \$10 – up from the current \$3 – for each 90-day generic prescription filled by mail through Tricare, the military's health insurance program. Tricare's current \$9 co-pay for a three-month supply of each brand-name drug would jump to \$20. The proposal also would impose charges for drugs the retirees now receive free at military hospitals and clinics. There would be a \$10 fee for each generic prescription and a \$20 charge for brand name drugs dispensed at those facilities." ["Drug fees for military retirees may be raised" [Virginia Pilot](#), 1/1/03]

◆ Threatened to veto the 2003 defense authorization bill if it included new benefits for disabled military retirees.

- Bush threatened to veto the 2003 defense authorization bill if it included new pension benefits for disabled military retirees. "Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.)...said ... that overwhelming majorities in both houses passed a version of the "concurrent receipt" provision out of basic fairness. Disabled veterans should be able to receive military retirement benefits and VA disability benefits without an offset, he said, because retirement pay is for length of service and disability compensation is for pain and suffering incurred in uniform."

"The pension provision would for the first time allow military retirees to collect retirement benefits from the Pentagon and disability benefits from the Veterans Administration at the same time. Proponents call this 'concurrent receipt.'"

(Veterans who are 60% or more disabled qualify for disability, but their military pensions are cut dollar for dollar for any disability payment they receive. Concurrent receipt means the injured veterans would be allowed to keep their pensions in addition to any disability payment, just as other government workers are allowed to do.) ["Bush threatens veto of defense bill" [Washington Post](#), 10/7/02]

◆ Fights to Take Away Money For Tortured Desert Storm Prisoners; George W. Bush Wants the Vets' Money to Fund Reconstruction Contracts For His Campaign Contributors Like Halliburton.

- "The Bush administration is seeking to block a group of American troops who were tortured in Iraqi prisons during the Persian Gulf War in 1991 from collecting any of the hundreds of millions of dollars in frozen Iraqi assets that they won last summer in a federal court ruling against the government of Saddam Hussein."

The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported "In a sworn court filing in the case for the former prisoners, Paul Bremer, the American administrator in Iraq, said the money won by the former prisoners had already been "completely obligated or expended" in reconstruction efforts. These funds are critical to maintaining peace and stability in Iraq." ["U.S. fights GIs' award for Iraqi torture; frozen funds intended for rebuilding" [San Francisco Chronicle](#) 11/10/03]



The Democratic Party:
Protecting America and Her Veterans.





Comparison of Agendas on Armed Forces & Veterans



| | Democrats | President Bush/House GOP |
|---|--|---|
| Pay Increase for those in Imminent Danger & Away from their Families | Yes. Have fought for a permanent increase in imminent danger and family separation pay, which succeeded in getting a nine-month extension. | No. The Bush Administration proposed a cut in imminent danger pay and separation allowance, but then reversed itself due to widespread opposition. |
| Bonus & Support for Troops in Iraq & Afghanistan | Yes. Fought to provide a bonus to troops and to provide <u>\$4.6 billion more</u> for our troops than Republicans to improve their safety and quality of life – some of which was enacted into law. | No. Voted against a bonus, and rejected additional support for our troops including funds for repairing equipment, ensuring our troops have clean drinking water, and covering troops' R&R transportation costs. |
| Improve Military Quality of Life | Yes. Fought to increase President's budget by \$1 billion for better housing for military personnel. | No. GOP bill cuts military construction spending – much of which goes for military housing – by \$1.5 billion. |
| Protect Veterans' Benefits | Yes. Fought against Republican-passed budget cuts in veterans' benefits. | No. House Republicans voted for \$14 billion in cuts to veterans' pension, compensation, education and other benefits. |
| Improve Veterans' Health Care | Yes. Fought to provide \$10 billion over 10 years in veterans' health care, and succeeded in providing additional health care to National Guard and reservists. | No. House GOP voted to cut veterans' health care by \$14 billion in the budget. Then they reneged on a promise to increase veterans' health care by \$1.8 billion. |
| End Tax on Disabled Veterans | Yes. Have a discharge petition to end the tax on all 560,000 disabled veterans who are military retirees now. | Not fully, not now. Opposed all year, but then reversed their position. Their plan leaves out two-thirds of disabled military retirees, and makes those they do cover wait 10 years for full benefits. |
| Tax Relief for Military Families | Yes. Have worked to increase the child tax credit that would help the families of 260,000 children in military families. | No. Opposed increasing the child tax credit, which would help families of 260,000 children in military families, and have held up military tax bill since last year. |
| Improve Survivor Benefits (SBP) | Yes. Included in the Democratic Salute to Veterans and the Armed Forces Package. | No. Republicans on the House Budget Committee voted down this provision. |
| Improve Education | Yes. Worked to protect Impact Aid, the education program for schools near military bases. | No. President's budget includes \$206 million cut in Impact Aid. |