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REPORT: DOOLITTLE HAS 2nd WORST VETERANS VOTING RECORD IN HOUSE

BROWN COMMENTS: "Responsible Government Keeps Its Promises to Our Veterans."

ROSEVILLE: According to a Scorecard for the 109th Congress posted by Americans for Shared Sacrifice, John Doolittle is tied for the second worst voting record in the House of Representatives on veterans' issues for the 109th Congress.

The Americans for Shared Sacrifice scorecard was created via analysis of the votes Disabled American Veterans (DAV) considered most important in the 109th Congress. DAV is one of the nation's largest and most respected non-partisan veteran's service and advocacy organizations—with nearly 1300 chapters and more than 1.3 million members nationwide.

Doolittle, who also received a 0% rating from DAV in 2003, 2004, and 2005, received a score of 13% for his actions in the 109th Congress. Contributing to his low rating were votes against expanded VA healthcare funding, increased survivors benefits, expanded support for VA claims processing, eliminating \$735 million in TRICARE user fees, and healthcare benefits for National Guardsmen and Reservists.

"Doolittle says he supports the troops, but the true measure of leadership is performance," noted Lt. Col. Charlie Brown. "And, with respect to keeping his promise to American veterans and their families, the performance of John Doolittle can be summed up in 3 words—cut and run."

According to DAV, the Number of veterans using the VA System has increased by 70% over the past 5 years—but funding has only increased by 49%, not including inflation. According to the GAO, the number of claims pending for 6 months or more at the VA has increased by 129% since 2003. And while, the VA announced a \$1.27 billion funding shortfall for FY 2005, the Bush Administration says it has already identified \$3 billion in VA shortfalls between the FY 2005 and FY 2006 budgets (CQ, 7/13/05).

'No one left behind' isn't a question of right and left," said Brown, "it's about right vs. wrong," Brown noted. "That's why I'll fight to get the politics out of VA healthcare funding, for a GI Bill for the 21st Century, for quicker (not slower) processing of VA Claims, health benefits for guardsmen and reservists, expanded readjustment programs for those who bear the lasting emotional scars of war, better outreach to veterans and families in need (including the more than 500,000 homeless American veterans) and concurrent receipt of pension and disability payments for all veterans."

While nearly 300 veterans related measures have been introduced in the 109th Congress, only fractions have actually received an up or down vote. According to Veterans United for Truth, a non-partisan watchdog group, most continue to flounder in committee, get rolled up into other bills, are killed as amendments to appropriations bills, or have needed provisions stripped from legislation when competing house/senate versions come out of Conference Committee.

For example, in June of 2006, the House passed HR 4939, an emergency appropriations bill for funding Iraq/Afghanistan Operations, Hurricane Recovery, and homeland security. In the July/August edition of DAV (Disabled American Veterans) Magazine, Joseph Zilante's commentary lambasted the conference committee report, which pulled out more than \$430 million for VA Healthcare, and \$45 million to rebuild the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport Miss. What was left in the bill, were countless pork barrel spending projects, including more than \$700 million to move railroad tracks enabling easier access to several Mississippi based casinos.

"As a veteran, the son of a veteran, the husband of a veteran, and the father of a veteran, veteran's aftercare is an every day issue—not an election year issue," Brown added. "Whether our country is at war or at peace, responsible government always keeps its promises to those who serve and sacrifice for our country."

Charlie Brown, Lt. Col. Ret spent 26 years in the U.S. Air Force. He served as a rescue helicopter pilot at the end of the Vietnam War, and has flown reconnaissance missions in support of military operations around the world. He is also a credentialed California teacher, former professional staff-member at the Roseville Police Department, and Democratic Nominee for Congress in California's 4th District

Just a few of Doolittle anti-veteran votes have included:

- Failure to vote on the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act (S. 1235, 5/22/06) which increased life insurance benefits for the families of service-members killed in the line of duty, disabled veterans, and provided funding for other veterans services. Doolittle missed the vote to attend a campaign fundraiser in Sacramento with VP Cheney, at which his wife Julie was paid a 15% commission on all moneys raised.
- Voting for his own pay raise as a member of Congress in 1997, 1999, 2000, 2004-2006, and introducing legislation on 3 separate occasions to increase perks for members of Congress (per diem, larger staffs, more paid member travel), while voting against granting a \$1500 bonus to every U.S. Service member in Iraq and Afghanistan (HR 3289, Vote #554, 10/17/2003).
- Voting against proposal to strip \$735 million in increased VA Health user fees from the FY 07 Veterans, Military Construction, and DOD Healthcare Appropriations bill (Edwards amendment, House Appropriations Committee, 5/10/06).
- Voting against 2 amendments to the FY 2006 Federal Budget (H. Con Res. 95, 3/17/05) that added \$15.8 billion for veterans education and health care, homeland security, the environment and infrastructure by reducing the tax benefit for those earning more than \$1 million. Doolittle also voted against an amendment requiring a balanced budget (Vote #87, 3/17.2005).
- Voting Against an amendment to H.R. 2528 (Military Quality of Life and VA Appropriations, FY2006) to add \$53 million for veterans healthcare and the processing of benefits and pension claims.
- Voting against a motion to end the Military Families Tax, which would have increased survivor benefits to more than 50,000 orphans and widows of deceased and fully disabled military personnel (FY '07, National Defense Authorization Act, Vote #144, H.R. 5122).
- Voted against expanding TRICARE health insurance program to thousands of Reservists and National Guard Members (H.R. 1815, 2005) Vote #221). More than 20% of all reservists lack health insurance, and citizen soldiers make up more than 35% of U.S. forces in Iraq.

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