

**THE MILITARY / VETERANS COALITION INDIANA POLITICAL OBJECTIVES –  
2010 / 2011**

The following are the approved Political Objectives for the legislative year 2011:

1. To secure phased implementation of full State tax exempt status for all military income.

**Rationale:** Military retirees and service members are a major economic force bringing to the State over one billion dollars per year in disposable income. Every effort should be made and incentives developed to attract and retain military to Indiana. Indiana continues to lose qualified military and veterans because of the greatly enhanced benefits available in adjacent and other states. Attempts to improve this situation by the 207<sup>th</sup> Indiana General Assembly have had little effect of attracting military, veterans and retirees to Indiana or stemming the outflow of serving service members. DOD continues to expend millions of dollars in Indiana, providing improved military benefits adds additional incentive to continue this practice.

2. To support the implementation of an Indiana Veterans Affairs Trust Fund / Military Veterans Benefits Board on the Wisconsin model and assure appointed board members have the long term vision as to for the full development of supported programs and institutions. To propose additional fund sources for the trust fund to include:

- A check bloc on State Income Tax forms to enable taxpayers to donate all or part of tax refunds.

- Institution of a Lottery scratch off card with proceeds payable to the trust.

**Rationale:** The recent passage of SEA 480 provides for the consolidation of both the Trust and Relief Fund boards. Current Board appointees do not fully meet the guidance of the Trust Fund board members as recommended by SB 480.

3. Assistance under the Military Family Relief Fund should be expanded to include Indiana Residents who are members of the active force and reside in the State.

**Rationale:** SEA 480 provides for assistance only for those Indiana Residents who are members of the Reserve Components or the National Guard. Non-inclusion of members of the active force is prejudicial, unfair and short sighted. Although

some provision may be cited to cover members of the active force under the Veterans Affairs Trust, this circumvents the current law, which makes relief funds available only to members of the Guard or Reserves.

4. To immediately implement State programs in support of Federal Veterans Administration efforts to improve the poor position of accessing Federal Disability Compensation payments.

Rationale: Indiana is ranked 44<sup>TH</sup> of 50 states in the administration of Federal Disability Compensation payments. (Ref: Report VA Inspector General 2005, Report, Institute. for Defense Analysis, Disability Comp. Dept. of Veterans Affairs.). If this trend continues, Indiana will soon be 50<sup>TH</sup> nationwide. This results in qualified Hoosier veterans not receiving due amounts of deserved compensation. Delays and errors in processing claims have resulted in millions of dollars lost to Hoosier disabled veterans over the years. Indiana must redesign their current programs to complement the recent, positive changes in the Federal processing system.

5. To secure legislative approval for an Indiana State Resettlement / Service Bonus and or combat duty pay of \$1,000 for National Guard, Reserves and Active Force members who are residents of Indiana and have served in a combat zone during the Gulf Wars.

Rationale: Serving Indiana service members deserve recognition & compensation for their personal sacrifice and economic hardships caused by unit activation & family separation.

6. To establish a death benefit of \$150,000 to be paid to family members of Indiana service members who have died as a result of armed conflict in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Rationale: It's only fitting that Indiana join other states in recognizing the loss of her sons and daughter who die in battle serving their country. By providing a reasonable amount of compensation to their families.

7. To fully support the expansion and inclusion of a "Colonel H. Weir Cook Museum" at the Indianapolis International Airport be added to the Indian War Memorial Commission.

Rationale: The patriotism and contributions of Indiana heroes is being lost to present and future generations.

Expanding the museum and putting it under the War Memorial Commission will permanently and appropriately recognize a true Indiana and National hero.

8. To get two residents of the Indiana State Veterans Home be added to the board of directors to insure residents needs and concerns are heard and understood. We resolve to also monitor the budget and management priority afforded the Indiana State Veterans Home in the areas patient acquisition, patient care and capital site improvements.

Rationale: The Indiana State Veterans home has experienced long-term construction management delays and a low priority by the State Dept. of Public works. This has resulted limitations on patient care, inability to use large sections of the physical plant, and implementation of the Veterans Home Long Range Capital Improvement Plan.

9. To get ALL Indiana colleges and universities that accept state funds to accept college credits obtained by service members/veterans from other institutes of higher education regardless of location and means of obtaining toward satisfying the requirements to receive a bachelors' degree.

Rationale: The military services encourages it service members to continue higher level education while assigned to duty stations all over the world. Some Indiana universities do not recognize and accept these credits toward a degree program. This encourages Indiana military residents to move or go to school at institutes outside Indiana. In so doing, these individuals permanently leave the state and Indiana loses their expertise after the service member receives a degree.

10. To get All Indiana Colleges and Universities to "suspend" a student who is called to active military duty without predigest. The student should be allowed

to return to the college/university and re-enroll in the same class at no additional expense and "re-take/finish" the original course.

**Rationale:** An individual departing to active military duty does so as a sacrifice to his/her self and should not be unduly punished for this sacrifice.

Implementing this action encourages Indiana military residents to return and continue their education in the state of Indiana. The College/University benefits from the funds while the individual is away; and they further benefit in that he returning individual will continue their education at their previously accepted institute.

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