



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

2018

Joseph A. PETRARCA

55TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



CAPITOL OFFICE

220 Irvis Office Building
P.O. Box 202055
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055
(717) 787-5142

DISTRICT OFFICES

239 Longfellow St.
Vandergrift, PA 15690
(724) 567-6982

620 N. Chestnut St.
Derry, PA 15627
(724) 694-5298

Latrobe Municipal Building
901 Jefferson St.
Latrobe, PA 15650
(724) 539-7560

VETERANS REPORT

Wall That Heals: Paying homage to our Vietnam veterans

In May, The Wall that Heals, a traveling replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., came to Harrisburg for several days.

It was displayed on the State Capitol grounds. Former governor and Vietnam War hero Tom Ridge was the keynote speaker. He gave a passionate address.

This wall honors more than 3 million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces in the Vietnam War and reflects the names of more than 58,000 men and women who were killed in Vietnam.

Unfortunately, many Americans are unable to make the trip to Washington, D.C., to visit the memorial, so the

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund – creators of the original wall and its replica – wanted to give all veterans and their families an opportunity to see the memorial. The wall and its mobile education unit, is traveling across the United States.

This is just one way we can pay respect to all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice during the Vietnam War.



Wall of Faces photo collection

The Department of Military and Veteran Affairs is working closely with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to find photos for each of the Pennsylvanians whose name is listed on the Wall of Faces. This program will ensure that Vietnam Veterans from Pennsylvania will be commemorated and honored by visitors from around the world for many years to come.

Visit vvmf.org/about-the-wall-of-faces to see the list of missing photos by state. If a loved one or a fellow veteran is on the list, please help by putting a face with a name by submitting photos. All photos collected will be featured in the VVMF Virtual Wall of Faces and in the future Education Center.

Troops for Teachers programs

Interested in a teaching career?

The Troops to Teacher grant program provides funding to recruit and aid veterans considering a career in education. Those interested in becoming teachers are provided with counseling services and guidance for requirements, teacher certification processes and referrals to employment opportunities. This is a great program to help veterans transition back into civilian life. For more information, visit proudtoserveagain.com.

Helping our veterans

Our veterans struggle with both visible and invisible wounds; many of them grow frustrated and disenfranchised with the extremely complicated system for assistance and benefits.

House Bill 985 would establish a Veteran Suicide Prevention Grant Program to be administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Our service men and women fought for our freedom and protect us every day. We should do all we can help to provide them with mental health programs when they return home.

Providing assistance to veterans

Veterans in our community live with the reality of their wounds each and every day. It is critical for me that we aid all those who have served our country, especially those who made a physical sacrifice.

That's why I have co-sponsored legislation (H.B. 304) that would continue to provide blind, amputee and paralyzed veterans with monthly pensions, and would increase monthly allowances given to recipients.

Our veterans sacrificed so much for our freedom, and we must do all we can to help them in their day-to-day lives. If you believe you or a loved one qualify for the current program, please contact my office for assistance with applications.

Veteran Registry

As we continue to work to create better communication between veterans and organizations who support them, I want to highlight an important program. The PA Veteran Registry allows veterans, family members and those who work with veterans to connect with the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs to request information related to valuable state benefits, programs and services. It also includes a weekly newsletter filled with updates and breaking news. To register, visit register.dmva.pa.gov or contact one of my constituent service offices for assistance.



Helping our medical military personnel transition into the civilian world

Legislation has been introduced that would assist our medical military personnel with transitioning into medical roles in the civilian world.

House Bill 2023, or the Military Medic Pilot Program, if passed, would provide services for members with military medical experience and an opportunity to put their medical skills to the test in the civilian world.

Although the program will not grant licensure or certification, it will open the door to potential employment and educational opportunities across the commonwealth.

The supervising physician or podiatrist must hold an active, unrestricted license issued by the state and the responsibility of full patient care will remain under the supervising physician. The bill is before the House Professional Licensure Committee.

New Castle Division of Vital Records walk-in service restored

Earlier this year, I fought to have the New Castle Division of Vital Records walk-in service restored after the services ended last year.

I advocated that the center be re-opened on behalf of those in the 55th Legislative District and I am happy that the New Castle Division of Vital Records walk-in service has re-opened. It is located at 105 Nesbit Road in New Castle and is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.

Citizens may now receive both birth and death certificates and they can even pick them up on the same day if the request is made by 11:30 a.m.

I'm thankful that the Health Department chose to reopen the center in March, because it allows the area to regain the ability to personally obtain important documents. I want to remind you that birth and death certificate copies are \$20 each and must be paid with check or money order. Also, a fee may be waived if the applicant is a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, the legal spouse of the Armed Forces member or widow/widower (unless remarried), or a dependent child of the Armed Forces member. The offices do not accept cash or credit cards.

With the coming of Real ID, it's even more important to have these services available.

Persian Gulf Veterans' Bonus Program deadline Aug. 31

I want to thank all of the veterans who have served and continue to serve our country so that we may enjoy the freedoms we have today as an independent nation.

To veterans of operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, I want to point out that the deadline for the Persian Gulf Veterans' Bonus Program is Aug. 31, 2018.

Those who served on active duty between Aug. 2, 1990, and Aug. 31, 1991, may qualify for the bonus.

The program pays \$75 a month for qualifying, active-duty service members, up to a \$525 maximum. For those whose death was related to illness or injury received in the line of duty in the operations, an additional \$5,000 is available to the surviving family. Service members who were declared prisoners of war also may be eligible for an additional \$5,000.

For more information about this program or other state programs that benefit veterans, please visit the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs website at www.dmva.pa.gov.

House passes veterans bills

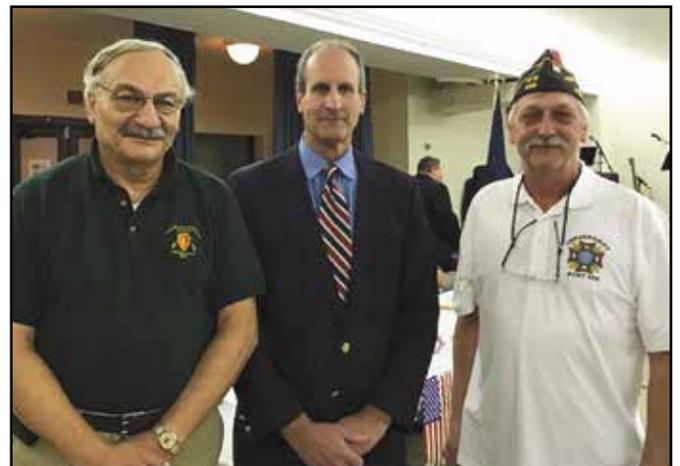
As you know, I support a number of bills designed to improve the lives of veterans and military families. Here are a few I supported when they passed the House and are now awaiting Senate action:

H.B. 302 — This bill would help former military medics who are transitioning to civilian work by requiring the state Department of Health to consider their military education, training and experience for purposes of fulfilling requirements for professional credentials related to EMTs. The bill is currently with the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee.

H.B. 980 — This bill, which I co-sponsored, would exclude veterans' federal disability compensation or pension from being considered when calculating income for purposes of state assistance programs or rebates. The bill would also extend the exclusion to an unmarried surviving spouse. This bill is in the process of being considered by the Senate.

H.B. 984 — The Military Family Relief Assistance Program is funded by a tax check-off that permits taxpayers to donate all or part of their tax refund to the program. This bill would extend the check-off, which is expiring, through January 2023. The bill is awaiting consideration by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

I'm encouraged by legislative action that has moved each of these bills forward and will continue to update you on their progress.



It's always an honor to spend part of Veterans Day with area veterans. This was with Vandergrift American Legion Post 114 and VFW Post 566. I'm pictured here with American Legion Trustee Mitch Abraham and VFW Commander Carl Trusiak.



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Joseph A. Petrarca

220 Irvis Office Building
P.O. Box 202055
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2055

Website: www.pahouse.com/Petrarca
Email: petrarca@pahouse.net
Facebook: www.facebook.com/RepJoePetrarca

lpo.jc.0818

Remembering our veterans

Memorializing those who have valiantly defended our country is an important part of our civic duty. That's why I am proud to have recently sponsored or co-sponsored several pieces of legislation that celebrate our veterans.

I introduced H.B. 2420, which would designate the Washington Street portion of Route 286 the First Sergeant Alexander Kelly Memorial Bridge. Kelly, born in Saltsburg in 1841, was awarded the Medal of Honor during the Civil War for his bravery and heroic deeds. He was a member of the Sixth United States Colored Troops. He then went on to serve with the Pittsburgh Police and is buried in St. Peter's Cemetery. The bill unanimously passed the House and now is in the Senate awaiting consideration.

I am also proud to co-sponsor H.Bs. 2423 and 2254, which would designate different sections of State Route 286 over Two Lick Creek as the Lance Corporal Joshua T. Twigg Memorial Bridge (east end of Clymer) and the Corporal Louis R. Tate Memorial Bridge (Clymer Borough), respectively. Both bills are before the House Transportation Committee.



My office can help you with:

- Free notary service
- Car registrations, special tags, disability placards, titles and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Assistance in obtaining and completing state forms of all kinds
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Complaints or questions about utilities and the Public Utility Commission
- Birth and death certificates
- Pennsylvania income tax questions or problems
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- Problems or questions about the state lottery
- PACE cards for senior citizens
- Consumer complaints
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups



Sign up for email updates

Sign up to receive email alerts about my legislative activities in Harrisburg and state-related issues that affect your life. Visit my website at www.pahouse.com/Petrarca, click "CONTACT" and then "Sign up for emails" and fill out the form.