

Interamerican University's San Juan campus. He coauthored a book with Puerto Rico's State Democratic Chair, Roberto Prats, about the 2008 Clinton presidential campaign in Puerto Rico, which they co-chaired.

The founder of a congressional internship program that has been replicated by nineteen states and territories, he is a longtime board member of a DC-based nonprofit, The Washington Center for Academic Internships and Scholarships. In his spare time, McClintock is an avid coin collector and an active member of the Episcopal Diocese of Puerto Rico.

Born in London, England in 1957, his father, a native of Texas, was an architect, while his mother, born in Puerto Rico, was a college professor. McClintock is the proud father of a Georgetown University sophomore and aspiring actor, Kevin Davison, and a high school senior, Stephanie Marie.

I am happy to honor Kenneth McClintock, during Hispanic Heritage Month, for his contributions to the Puerto Rican community.

COMMEMORATING THE SACRIFICES OF AMERICA'S VETERANS

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to all of the men and women who have worn the uniform of country and risked their lives to keep our nation free and safe.

We come together to celebrate our veterans who have courageously defended our freedom, and honor the memory of those who have borne the battle, including the more than 4,400 American servicemen and women who have died in Iraq and more than 2,200 who have died in Afghanistan.

We also honor the sacrifices of over 50,000 brave troops wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Let us pay tribute to those currently serving around the globe as well as veterans and service men and women who are with us today as they have served our nation with honor and distinction.

Today, I reaffirm my commitment to the nation's more than 2 million troops and reservists, their families, and 22 million veterans, including 32,477 in the 18th Congressional District of Texas, that they will be provided the quality job opportunities they have earned.

A grateful nation cares for its soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen, not only when they're abroad, but also upon their return home.

Congress must communicate its wholehearted support for the security of the nation and build upon the historic improvements made in strengthening quality health care for veterans and offering the promise of college to those returning from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

On the battlefield, the military pledges to leave no soldier behind. As a nation, it is our duty to leave no veteran behind.

This day and every day, let us honor their service with actions that fulfill our commitment to our troops, their families, and our veterans—and that are worthy of our grateful nation.

HELPING ENCOURAGE REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR VETERANS

I introduced H.R. 4110, the Transitioning Heroes Act, which amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow employers a business-related \$1,000 tax credit for each veteran hired.

ENSURING JOBS IN ENERGY FOR VETERANS

I am proud to have authored legislation amending the Innovation Act (H.R. 3309) to include a provision requiring the PTO Director to evaluate the economic impact of the Innovation Act on the ability of veteran-owned small businesses to secure their right to their inventions and discoveries.

This amendment was critical to our community of veterans and to the strength of our economy because historically veterans have struggled to adjust to life upon returning home.

HELPING HOMELESS VETERANS

The House of Representatives unanimously adopted an amendment I offered to the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriation Act for FY 2015, which expresses the sense of Congress that programs designed to assist homeless veterans should receive priority consideration by the Department.

Reducing and eliminating homelessness among veterans, those who risked their lives to protect our freedom, should be one of the nation's highest priorities. My amendment will help ensure that the rate of homelessness among veterans in the United States does not increase.

The Jackson Lee Amendment helps remind us of our obligation to provide our veterans the assistance needed to avoid homelessness, which includes adequate funding for Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (VASH) programs that provide case-management services, adequate housing facilities, mental health support, and address other areas that contribute to veteran homelessness.

GUARANTEEING MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS TO MEET THE LONG TERM NEEDS OF OUR ARMED FORCES, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

I am also proud to have succeeded in amending H.R. 1960, the FY2014 National Defense Authorization Act to include my amendment providing qualified and professional mental health care to serve our armed forces members, veterans, and their families.

Without proper mental health services veterans will fall short of full recovery and be less able to function as productive citizens.

INCREASING PTSD FUNDING BY \$5,000,000

I succeeded in amending National Defense Appropriations Acts for FY2014 and FY2015 to include my amendments providing \$10 million in increased funding to treat veterans suffering from PTSD.

The additional funding is necessary to identify the research needed to combat these diseases that are crippling our men and women in our Armed Services and their respective families.

As we look to PTSD, some of a soldier's wounds are invisible to the naked eye, for these are wounds that should be properly treated.

One of the best ways to increase access to treatment is to increase the number of medical facilities and mental health professionals who are available to serve the needs of men and women currently serving and those who have become veterans.

MAKING SURE OUR DISABLED VETERANS RECEIVE THE HEALTHCARE AND DISABILITY COMPENSATION THEY HAVE EARNED

I co-sponsored the H.R. 333, the Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act, which increases veteran's pay and disability compensation and maintains secure, dependable and reliable veterans' programs, especially for disabled veterans is very important.

I also strongly supported and voted to pass H.R. 3202, the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, which expands access to health care for veterans and addresses the shortage of health professionals in the VA.

This legislation also ensures access to care for rural veterans and provides funding to establish 27 new VA clinics, including a new research facility in Houston.

The law also expands access to education for veterans and their families and extends a community-based housing program for veterans.

From 2007 through 2010, when Democrats were the majority in both the House and the Senate, there was no government shutdown—the Congress made historic gains for America's troops, veterans and military families.

That is why the American Legion said "111th Congress Achieves Banner Year on Veterans Legislation."

The real successes were the passage of bills that affected nearly every veteran in America.

For example, the Democratically-led Congress:

Enacted the new Post 9–11 GI Bill to restore the promise of a full, four-year college education, that has already allowed over 700,000 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars to afford college, just like after World War II, along with tax incentives for hiring to expand job opportunities for returning soldiers.

Strengthened health care for more than 5 million veterans, with a historic commitment—including the largest single increase in the history of the VA—for more doctors and nurses, better access for rural veterans, and expanded efforts to treat the signature injuries of the war, PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury, while enacting a law to guarantee timely and predictable funding for veterans' health care and to address the health care needs of our nearly 2 million female veterans.

Provided troops and veterans the benefits they have earned and resources they need, giving troops a pay raise, restoring military readiness, providing the best training and equipment for the men and women serving in our Armed Forces, taking steps to reduce the backlog and wait for veterans trying to access their earned benefits, providing special payments for service members and veterans who were forced to serve under stop-loss orders since 2001, and making headway in ending the Disabled Veterans Tax and the Military Families' Tax.

Strengthened support for military families, building more military child care centers and better military family housing, and enacting landmark legislation to provide much-needed support for family members and other caregivers for wounded veterans.

Added \$23 billion for veteran's health care and services, and accomplished a 60% increase in VA discretionary spending between 2007 and 2010.

Secured advance appropriations for the Veterans Administration for the first time—creating an uninterrupted source of funding for medical care for veterans.

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act helped veteran caregivers with training, access to mental health counseling, and 24-hour respite care in veteran's homes.

1. The law helped veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom by allowing them to select a caregiver who would receive a financial stipend along with travel and lodging expenses associated with the veteran's care.

2. This law also expanded and improved services for the then 1.8 million women veterans, and provided for the expected increased number of veterans that would transition from active duty to civilian life.

3. The law authorized the VA to provide healthcare for newborn infants of women veterans.

It is important that we preserve and build upon this record of achievement.

Veteran homelessness was addressed in the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 by increasing the VA loan limit which helped veterans with refinancing their homes by making low-interest home loans more available to veterans.

Mr. Speaker, all members of this body were deeply concerned over the troubling disclosures reported in the media regarding conditions as some of the nation's VA facilities.

I am pleased to report that the Department of Veterans Affairs, at the direction of President Obama and mandated by Congress, has made substantial progress in improving the performance of VHA healthcare now, developing a positive service culture, transitioning from "sick care" to "health care" in the broadest sense, and developing agile business systems and management processes that are efficient, transparent and accountable.

For example, The "Road to Veterans Day" initiative, launched on September 8, 2014 by Secretary Robert A. McDonald, has resulted in significant progress for Veterans over the past 3 months

During that time, DVA has taken deliberate actions to improve service delivery for Veterans, rebuild trust, increase accountability and transparency and put the department on the path to long-term excellence and reform.

Secretary McDonald has traveled extensively during his first few months in office, visiting 41 DVA facilities in 21 cities while also making 11 recruiting visits to medical schools.

To improve service delivery, VA has prioritized efforts to accelerate Veterans off of wait lists and into clinics through the Accelerated Care Initiative begun by Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson this summer.

Through this initiative, VA medical centers have increased access to care inside and outside of VA, added more clinic hours and work days, deployed mobile medical units, and shared their best practices from VA's high-performing facilities throughout the organization.

Significant improvements have resulted nationally:

1. Scheduling more than 1.2 million more appointments in the past four months than in the same period last year.

2. In total, VA medical centers have scheduled over 19 million Veteran appointments from June to October 1, 2014.

3. Reducing the national new patient Primary Care wait time by 18 percent.

4. Completing 98 percent of appointments within 30 days of the Veterans' preferred date, or the date determined to be medically necessary by a physician.

5. Authorizing 1.1 million non-VA care authorizations, a 47 percent increase over the same period last year.

Secretary McDonald addressed all employees via Video Teleconference, where he directed each employee to reaffirm the mission and core values of the Department.

A new award program has been initiated to highlight employees who truly embody DVA's ICARE values—Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence. The first nominations for this new incentive program will be accepted in January 2015.

Since June 2014, DVA has proposed disciplinary action against more than 40 employees nationwide related to data manipulation or patient care.

DVA is also working diligently to cooperate with the over 100 investigations currently being undertaken by the VA Inspector General, the Justice Department, and the Office of Special Counsel (OSC).

On October 3, OSC certified DVA under their Whistleblower Protection Certification Program after DVA worked to achieve compliance and protect employees who identify or report problems from unlawful retaliation.

DVA also worked closely with OSC to successfully resolve whistleblower retaliation complaints filed by three individuals from the DVA Phoenix Health Care System.

DVA has posted data online on a regular basis since the beginning of June showing the number of appointments on waiting lists and the average wait times at each medical center across the country.

Additionally, each medical center and benefits office has conducted a town hall with Veterans and the public to collect feedback. These town halls will continue at each facility every three months.

DVA is reviewing options to reorganize the department for success, guided by ideas and initiatives from Veterans, employees, and all of our stakeholders.

This reorganization will be known as "MyVA" and is designed to provide Veterans with a seamless, integrated, and responsive customer service experience—whether they arrive at VA digitally, by phone, or in person.

Long-term reform of DVA also means making sure DVA has the medical professionals we need to best care for our patients, which is why Secretary McDonald launched a national recruiting effort in August, visiting medical schools in an effort to bring the best and brightest to work at DVA.

On September 17, DVA announced an increase in the salary pay scale for DVA doctors and dentists to aid in recruiting and retention.

As part of the "Road to Veterans Day," Secretary McDonald has reaffirmed DVA's homelessness program and the Veterans Benefits Administration's Claims Transformation Strategy.

DVA remains committed to working with its federal, state and local partners to end homelessness among Veterans, which has been reduced by 33% since 2010.

With the backlog of disability claims reduced by 60% since its peak in March of 2013, DVA is also on track to eliminate the backlog in

2015 and will continue to expand online claim-submission capability in all programs.

Mr. Speaker, as we honor and remember the sacrifices of the millions of veterans who have served our country throughout its history, let us always remember that the first obligation of a grateful is, as President Lincoln reminded us long ago, "to care for him who has borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

IN RECOGNITION OF AMERICAN VALOR AT THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE AND THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PATTON PRAYER CARDS

HON. MATT CARTWRIGHT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor and remember the bravery of American troops who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and to recall the unique prayer cards General George Patton distributed to his Third Army in December 1944. The prayer, which asked for favorable weather, was printed on the back of a Christmas greeting from General Patton. The troops received these prayer cards prior to the Battle of the Bulge.

The incident of the now famous Patton Prayer commenced with a telephone call to the Third Army Chaplain on the morning of December 8, 1944. After weeks of severe rains that threatened the prospects of victory, General Patton called to ask Msgr. James H. O'Neill if he knew a prayer for good weather. While looking out on the steadily falling rain, the chaplain wrote an original prayer alongside a Christmas greeting, and then had it circulated it to all 250,000 Third Army troops on the eve of the Battle of the Bulge.

The prayer, in part, read: "Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory . . ."

The Battle of the Bulge, one of World War II's most critical battles, started when Nazi forces launched a major surprise offensive on December 16. Fought among the dense forests bordering Belgium and Luxembourg, it was the bloodiest battle the U.S. encountered during the World War II, with over 18,000 Americans killed and over 65,000 captured or injured. The heavy rains and thick fog eventually subsided, and Allied forces were able to hold off Nazi forces and severely deplete their resource supply. The Battle of the Bulge is symbolic of the resilience and strength of American soldiers, who were unyielding in the face of both enemy fire and debilitating weather. After the Battle, General Patton told Msgr. O'Neill that "our prayers worked." To General Patton, prayer was just as powerful a weapon of war and as defense and attack strategies.

It is an honor for me to commemorate the valor of these American soldiers, the leadership of General Patton, and the ultimate victory of the "Greatest Generation."