



June 27, 2013

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McCain No Friend to Vets

At Friday's debate at the University of Mississippi, John McCain said: "As far as our other issues that he brought up are concerned, I know the veterans. I know them well. And I know that they know that I'll take care of them. And I've been proud of their support and their recognition of my service to the veterans. And I love them. And I'll take care of them. And they know that I'll take care of them. And that's going to be my job."

In fact, McCain has been no friend to veterans, according to his ratings from different veterans groups, which are based on his votes in Congress.

2006: Senator McCain supported the interests of the Disabled American Veterans 20 percent in 2006.

2006: In 2006 Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America gave Senator McCain a grade of D.

2006: Senator McCain sponsored or co-sponsored 18 percent of the legislation favored by the The Retired Enlisted Association in 2006.

2005: Senator McCain supported the interests of the Disabled American Veterans 25 percent in 2005.

2004: Senator McCain supported the interests of the Disabled American Veterans 50 percent in 2004.

2004: Senator McCain supported the interests of the The Retired Enlisted Association 0 percent in 2004.

2003-2004: Senator McCain supported the interests of the Vietnam Veterans of America 100 percent in 2003-2004.

2003: Senator McCain supported the interests of the The American Legion 50 percent in 2003.

2001: Senator McCain supported the interests of the Vietnam Veterans of America 46 percent in 2001.

1999: Senator McCain supported the interests of the Disabled American Veterans 66 percent in 1999.

1997-1998: Senator McCain supported the interests of the Vietnam Veterans of America 0 percent in 1997-1998.

1989-1990: On the votes that the Vietnam Veterans of America considered to be the most important in 1989-1990, Senator McCain voted their preferred position 50 percent of the time.

Senator Barack Obama has been a much better friend to veterans, based on his ratings from veterans groups.

McCain consistently voted against increasing funding for the Veterans' Administration, which oversees all medical care for veterans. McCain:

- Voted *against* an amendment providing \$20 billion to the VA's medical facilities. [5/4/06]

- Voted *against* providing \$430 million to the VA for outpatient care "and treatment for veterans," one of only 13 Senators to do so. [4/26/06]

- Voted *against* increasing VA funding by \$1.5 billion by closing corporate loopholes. [3/14/06]

- Voted *against* increasing VA funding by \$1.8 billion by ending "abusive tax loopholes." [3/10/04]

McCain refused to support the 21st Century GI Bill, sponsored by Senator Jim Webb of Virginia, which the Veterans of Foreign Wars endorsed. McCain opposed the new GI Bill that President Bush -- after originally threatening to veto -- signed into law this past June 30. The new GI Bill will cover veterans for the full cost of education at any public school in the country and many private schools (it's capped at the cost of the most expensive public school in the respective state). It provides upfront tuition payments directly to the school, a book/supply stipend of \$1,000 per year and a monthly living stipend. McCain did not vote on this legislation. He was in California to attend a fundraiser. McCain opposed the measure, because it provided full education benefits to members of the military after just one stint in the armed services.

McCain also supported measures that veterans groups said would weaken the VA health system by privatizing some of its medical functions.