

Chet Edwards to Receive VFW Congressional Award

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WASHINGTON — America's oldest major veterans' organization has selected Texas Rep. Chet Edwards (D-17th) to receive its 2008 Congressional Award for his outstanding service to veterans, service members and their families. The congressman, who chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, will be presented the award March 3 at the annual Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. Community Service and Legislative Conference at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in northwest Washington.

"This award is extremely important to the VFW," said VFW National Commander George Lisicki, a Vietnam veteran from Carteret, N.J., "because it recognizes a champion who is in our corner in Congress."

The VFW Congressional Award has been presented annually since 1964 to one member of the House or Senate for significant legislative contributions on behalf of those who have worn the uniform. Past recipients include strong national security and veterans' advocates, such as Mississippi's Sen. John Stennis (D) and Rep. "Sonny" Montgomery (D), and South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond (R), among many others. Last year the award went to Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman (I).

Edwards, now in his ninth term, has been a staunch supporter of the 50,000 veterans within his district, and for the tens of thousands of soldiers and family members at nearby Fort Hood. His successful fight to keep the Waco VA Medical Center from closing served not only his constituency, but is now benefiting those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through a research partnership with the Army to examine post-traumatic stress disorders. He helped block Pentagon efforts to raise military retiree Tricare medical premiums, eliminated the Survivor Benefit Plan reduction for military widows, and is working to ensure every disabled military retiree receives their VA and military pay concurrently without offset. And, according to Lisicki, the congressman was a driving force behind the record \$6.6 billion increase to VA's discretionary budget this year.

"Our military, our veterans, and our families of past and present have no better friend in Congress than Chet Edwards," said Lisicki. "I am honored to present this prestigious VFW

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national award to him."

Edwards is the fourth Texan to receive the VFW Congressional Award. The others were Rep. Olin Teague (D-6th) in 1969, Rep. George H. Mahon (D-19th) in 1974, and Sen. John Tower (R) in 1983.