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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Senators McCain, Bennet and Reps. Matsui, Petri and Courtney Introduce Legislation to Expand 'Troops to Teachers' Program

Bipartisan, bicameral effort will expand opportunities for returning troops to teach in nation's schools

WASHINGTON, DC –Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Michael Bennet (D-CO), and Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA), Tom Petri (R-WI), and Joe Courtney (D-CT), introduced the bipartisan, bicameral Post-9/11 Troops to Teachers Enhancement Act, which seeks to expand the existing Troops to Teachers program to allow more troops to teach in America's schools, during a press conference today in Washington, D.C.

"As we continue to seek ways to improve the quality of education in our country, we should encourage programs like Troops to Teachers to incite returning service men and women from Iraq and Afghanistan to go into the classroom," said Senator John McCain. "Our veterans make excellent candidates to impart the virtues of service to the next generation and instill the value of learning as a means to self-improvement."

"Our military is the strongest in the world not because of our weapons or tanks, but because of the men and women who serve in its ranks. With that in mind, we should be doing everything we can to create, support and enhance pathways to the teaching profession, and allow our military men and women to continue their service in classrooms across the country," Senator Michael Bennet said. "Let's enlist their skills and experience to once again make America's system of public education the envy of the world and the driver of the American Dream."

"At a time when there is an overwhelming need for highly-qualified math and science teachers, expanding and strengthening the Troops to Teachers program has never been more important. This legislation is a crucial step in supporting our veterans and students by restoring the original intent of this program, and giving our nation's veterans the opportunity to serve their country again," stated Representative Doris Matsui. In March, Matsui and Petri introduced the Troops to Teachers Improvement Act of 2009, which has now been incorporated into the more comprehensive reform introduced Tuesday.

“Teachers who have served in the military come with valuable life experience and character traits that are uncommon in the classroom. In an increasingly globalized economy, these valuable characteristics provide a vital resource for schools across the country,” stated Representative Tom Petri.

“Our men and women in uniform are among the most talented, public-spirited Americans in today’s workforce,” stated Representative Joe Courtney. “Expanding this program will direct their unmatched experience, discipline, and leadership skills into America’s classrooms. This is a win-win situation for our schools, military personnel, and especially our children.”

The Troops to Teachers program, originally created in 1994, provides qualified troops with financial incentives to teach in the nation’s neediest schools.

The Senate-House companion legislation, the Post-9/11 Troops to Teachers Enhancement Act, will make the existing program more accessible by reducing length of military service requirements for participants, expanding the number of school districts at which troops may receive a stipend to teach, and by creating an advisory board charged with continuously seeking ways to improve awareness and participation in the program. In California, over 3,600 more schools would benefit from this program. In Sacramento, nearly 150 additional schools could participate, and students and schools across the country will benefit as well.

CONTACTS:

BROOKE BUCHANAN (McCain) PHONE: (202) 224-7130

DEIRDRE MURPHY (Bennet) PHONE: (202) 224-5852

MARA LEE (Matsui) PHONE: (202) 225-7163

NIEL WRIGHT (Petri) PHONE: (202) 225-2476

BRIAN FARBER (Courtney) PHONE: (202) 225-2105 CELL: (202) 420-9412

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versions of the Post-9/11 Troops to Teachers Enhancement Act legislation introduced at Tuesday's press conference.

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