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Included in larger bipartisan bill, measure will ensure families can grieve in peace

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CONCORD, NH – Surrounded by members of numerous New Hampshire veterans and military organizations at a press conference in Concord this morning, Congressman Charles F. Bass (NH-02) hailed enactment of his legislation to preserve the dignity of military funerals by limiting disruptions before, during, and after services.

Bass said:

"When I came back to Congress last year, I started meeting with New Hampshire veterans on a regular basis to hear firsthand what issues Congress should address. This was at the top of their lists, and I couldn't have been prouder to introduce legislation in the House last April to ensure that the men and women who have fought and died for our country receive the greatest dignity and respect as their families grieve.

"This measure will preserve the dignity of these somber events while still protecting the First Amendment rights that our nation's heroes have fought and died for. I am very encouraged that Congress can come together to enact a bipartisan measure for the men and women who have served our country and especially for their families, and I thank the President for signing it into law this week."

Bass' measure will strengthen federal regulations currently in place by:

- Increasing the quiet time before and after military funeral services during which disruptive protests are prohibited from 60 minutes to 120 minutes;
- Increasing the buffer around a military funeral service from 300 feet to 500 feet and increasing the buffer around access routes to a funeral service area from 150 feet to 300 feet;
- And by increasing civil penalties on violators.

In 2007, the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) held a protest at the funeral of Army Captain Jonathan Grassbaugh from Hampstead, who was killed by an IED while bravely serving his country on patrol in Iraq. Although Grassbaugh was buried at Arlington National Cemetery, his funeral services were held in Hampstead and were protested by members of the WBC.

Bass' language from his bipartisan bill, the Sanctity of Eternal Rest for Veterans (SERVE) Act (H.R. 1591), was included in a larger veterans bill that President Obama signed into law on Monday, the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act (now Public Law 112-154).

In addition to Bass' measure, the law will expand accountability and transparency at the VA by

streamlining the disability claims process and improving transparency in VA funding, as well as bring immediate VA health care to the Camp Lejeune veterans and their families who have been diagnosed with a disease related to the water contamination that occurred at the base between 1957 and 1987.

Bass was joined this morning by Gold Star Mother Jean Durgin of Henniker, whose son Russell was killed in Afghanistan in 2006. Bass was also joined by Major General William Reddel III, Adjutant General of the New Hampshire National Guard; the Chairman of the State-Federal Relations and Veterans Affairs Committee in the New Hampshire House of Representatives Al Baldasaro (R-Londonderry), USMC (Ret.); the Vice Chair of the State Veterans Advisory Committee Bobby Broneske, USAF (Ret.); Elaine Driscoll, USAF (Ret.), a member of Bass' Veterans Advisory Board; New Hampshire American Legion State Commander Ken Maynard; Commandant of the New Hampshire Veterans Home Barry Conway; and Captain Bill Joransen, USN (Ret.) of Nashua, the immediate past president of the New England District of the Association of the United States Navy, as well as members of New Hampshire veterans groups, including the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the New Hampshire Air Force Association, the Combat Motorcycle Veterans Association, Rolling Thunder, and the Patriot Guard Riders.

The national military support groups and veterans organizations supporting Bass' measure include the Gold Star Wives of America, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, the Marine Corps League, the Military Officers Association of America, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Non Commissioned Officers Association, and Veterans of Foreign Wars, among others.

Senator Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) had introduced similar legislation to Bass' measure in the Senate last year.

This is the second measure Bass introduced that was signed into law. The first one was a [provision included in the Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act](#) that would make it easier for medical device manufacturers to create and produce devices for individuals with rare diseases.

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