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Congressional office: After serving overseas deployments, the quartet now use their skills to help constituents.

By PAUL FEELY

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After years in the Armed Services, four local veterans are continuing to serve the greater good — as Congressional interns.

U.S. Rep. Charles Bass, R-NH, announced last week that several veterans have been interning in his Nashua office, assisting Congressional staff with research, constituent services and other outreach.

The interns are Colin Beswick of Manchester, a threeyear member of the New Hampshire Army National Guard who recently returned from combat duty in Iraq and is finishing an associate program at New Hampshire Technical Institute before starting his bachelor's degree at the University of New Hampshire; Nicole Costigan of Concord, a 15-year combat veteran of the U.S. Army currently serving in the New Hampshire Air Force National Guard, Scott Whitaker of Ashland, a member of the New Hampshire Army National Guard who recently returned from his second deployment and who now is a first-year law student at the University of New Hampshire School of Law and Congressional Fellow Bob Broneske of Londonderry, retired from the U.S. Air Force and currently vice chair of the New Hampshire State Veterans Advisory Committee and regiona director of the Combat Motorcycle Veterans Association.

All four interns assist Rep. Bass with his military and veterans advisory boards, which meet on a regular basis to offer advice and suggestions on legislation and other matters affecting New Hampshire's veterans.

"I am thrilled to have the experience and expertise of these four veterans helping me and my staff in New Hampshire," said Rep. Bass.

"One of my most important jobs as a member of Congress is to help constituents resolve issues with the federal government, and the experience and knowledge these individuals have has been a great asset in assisting constituents who are having difficulties with the VA or other federal agencies. Each one is a true public servant in every sense of the word and the people of New Hampshire's Second District are fortunate to have them working on their behalf."

After his tour of duty in Iraq, Beswick, 21, was searching for a way to help other veterans get the services they need from Veterans Affairs Services. He decided to apply to the internship program.

"When I was referred to the internship program through my Guard unit's leadership, I immediately saw the value in it," said Beswick. "I chose to take part in the program because I am always looking for a challenge and enjoy learning new things, especially in the field of

politics. I also knew it would be a great opportunity for work experience and networking as well as a chance to help out New Hampshire's veterans population. I felt that I had something to offer in this position and helping veteran and civilian constituents alike is something I can take pride in and feel good about doing."

Broneske, 48, recently found himself unemployed and felt his free time allowed him the chance to help others.

"Becoming a Congressional Fellow is a valuable expansion of what I do for veterans," said Broneske. "It is also a way for me to take the skills and abilities I have and expand them in new ways, as well as learn some new capabilities. This was a phenomenal opportunity to serve the congressman and the people of New Hampshire in a new way that I would not normally have had the time or availability to attempt. I hope to be able to continue to grow and further utilize my capabilities in an area that is extremely beneficial to our veterans and active-duty service members."

Costigan, 35, served in the Army in 2007 during Operation Iraqi Freedom, as a member of a critical care air transport team.

She served in Operation Enduring Freedom in Kandahar in 2011 and Ramstein in 2012 on the same team. She attends monthly meetings in Concord on behalf of Rep. Bass, collecting post-9/11 data on veterans in the state who have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, traumatic brain injuries, or both. "I am also researching community-based programs that are working in different states that could potentially be brought to New Hampshire to benefit our veterans," said Costigan.

"Since I have a recent deployment history, I am able to share my experiences with the resources that the New Hampshire National Guard offers its airmen, post deployment. I also know that as a vet myself, we don't want to necessarily go to the VA for help or speak to resources that are on our own base. Many veterans prefer to speak to civilian resources that are completely separate from the military. I have a background in the medical field, so I feel like that enables me to be even more of a health-care advocate for veterans who may not know what they need or what resources are available to them."

Whitaker answers phone calls in the Nashua office, meets with constituents, performs research for veteran's cases, and helps the staff "in any way that I can."

"It is a rewarding experience to successfully help constituents solve a problem that they were unable to solve themselves," said Whitaker.

"My original intention for becoming an intern for Congressman Bass was to continue my efforts in helping people in New Hampshire, especially veterans. Working with the congressman and his staff has allowed me to reach a group of veterans who usually are forgotten by mainstream media: retired veterans who are having difficulty working within the system to receive the help

they need."



From left, veterans Nicole Costigan of Concord, Colin Beswick of Manchester, Scott Whitaker of Ashland and Congressional Fellow Bob Broneske of Londonderry are interning for Congressman Charles Bass, center.