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By CHRIS GAROFOLO, Staff Writer
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U.S. Rep. Charlie Bass presented several long-awaited service medals yesterday to a naval veteran from Newport who completed two tours of duty during the Vietnam War.

Dennis Stanion, a U.S. Navy veteran who served during Vietnam, appeared with Bass, R-N.H., at the congressman's Newport office to receive decorations he should have received four decades earlier. Stanion, 68, had contacted Bass' congressional team shortly after receiving a pamphlet about the office opening on Main Street.

"I just never thought it would take place. It just feels so good to be able to finally get what I knew I had but I never had the wherewithal how to get it," Stanion said. "This was all because of a post card that came in the mail."

The congressman said Stanion was disabled during his service in the Navy and never was fully honored for his time in the armed forces.

"Due to a number of different circumstances, he wound up minus all his decorations. Some of them were never given to them or misplaced," Bass said. "I just feel that one of the pleasurable duties that I have as a congressman is to recognize our war veterans, even if it's 40 years after their service."

A tattooed Stanion, appearing with his son Walter, thumbed through a brown envelope containing his shiny new medals, one for Vietnam service and another for national defense, and a handful of ribbons recognizing his service.

"I only had two before, and what it was is they were in a hurry to get us out [of Vietnam], so we never got anything when we got out," he said. "When we got back to the States, they wanted everybody out; the quicker they got you out, the less they had to pay."

It was through Stanion's communication with the district office that provided his proper decoration, which he plans to wear this weekend for the Memorial Day parade.

"This is one of many types of issues that district offices deal with," Bass said. "I try not to make it about me, it really has nothing to do with me. I serve as a transmitter on behalf of the American people, the honor that this individual deserves. And it's a great honor for me to do it, but what's really important is the fact that this individual is receiving the recognition that he should have received or deserved to receive many years ago."

The medal presentation came one day after Bass kicked off his re-election campaign for the New Hampshire 2nd District seat.

His "Commitment to New Hampshire" campaign started Monday with a speech to the New

Hampshire Federation of Republican Women at the annual Lilac Luncheon in Nashua, N.H., and includes stops later this week throughout the state.

Bass served six terms in Congress before losing in 2006 to former Rep. Paul Hodes, a Concord Democrat who unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate. Bass will square-off against Democrat Ann McLane Kuster again in a rematch from the 2010 election.

