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MILITARY COALITION PRESENTS TOP AWARDS TO HILL ADVOCATES

Alexandria, Va. The Military Coalition (TMC), an influential Washington, DC-based consortium of 32 military and veterans groups, presented its highest awards on Sept. 29 to two legislators and two congressional staff members who have championed the causes of compensation and benefits improvements for military families. The awards ceremony was held at the Reserve Officers Association Building on Capitol Hill.

Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Representative Ike Skelton (D-MO) received the Coalition's 2010 Award of Merit.

Akaka, who chairs the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, was recognized for his leadership in winning enactment of legislation to provide benefits and services to caregivers of wounded warriors and female veterans, and sponsoring legislation to improve post-9/11 GI Bill coverage.

Skelton, who chairs the House Armed Services Committee, was honored for his leadership in supporting military pay comparability with the private sector, military health care improvements, and relief from compensation inequities affecting disabled retirees and military survivors.

Colonel Steve Strobbridge (USAF-Ret), TMC Co-Chair and Government Relations Director of the Military Officers Association of America, said, "Chairman Skelton has been in the forefront of a broad range of compensation, health care, and quality of life improvements for the military community. Every segment of the military population – currently serving, Guard/Reserve, retired, survivors and family members – has positively and dramatically benefited from the initiatives he has championed with such determination and persistence."

MCPO Joseph Barnes (USN-Ret), TMC Co-chair and National Executive Director of the Fleet Reserve Association, said, "Sen. Akaka has taken the lead on almost every aspect of veterans' benefit improvements this year. We're especially grateful for his leadership in winning compensation and health coverage for caregivers, many of whom have had to sacrifice their jobs and homes to provide full-time care for a wounded loved one. He also is leading the charge to ensure fair GI Bill treatment for Guard and Reserve personnel and restore GI Bill coverage for

all-important occupational and on-the-job training programs that are so crucial to helping returning veterans find productive employment.”

TMC also presented its annual Freedom Award to Ms. Kim Lipsky, Deputy Staff Director for the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, and Mr. Jacob Parker, Legislative Assistant for Rep. Tom Latham, for their work in promoting support for military and veterans’ quality of life programs behind the scenes.

“The legislators are the champions,” said MSG Michael Cline (USA-Ret), TMC President and Executive Director of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States, “but their staffs expend huge amounts of effort in crafting the legislation, working with the military associations to fill in the details, and coordinating our mutual efforts to get other legislators and the public on board. Kim Lipsky and Jacob Parker have been great supporters on a wide variety of key issues affecting our community. Kim’s work on the wounded warrior caregiver legislation and Jacob’s in support of fairer treatment for Guard and Reserve members and families have been especially noteworthy.”

TMC represents the interests of more than six million members around the world, including active duty, National Guard, Reserve, and retired members and veterans of the seven uniformed services, plus their families and survivors.

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