

# New life for vets' teacher training

Petri plan would  
expand number  
of eligible schools

By Larry Bivins

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WASHINGTON — If U.S. Rep. Tom Petri needs help promoting a federal program to aid military veterans who want new careers as teachers, he can contact James Solum and Alice Schuelke.

Solum, at Burlington High School, and Schuelke, at Corneil Elementary School in Chippewa County, commend Petri, R-Fond du Lac, and Rep. Doris Matsui, D-Calif., for their efforts to expand the number of schools eligible for the Troops to Teachers program.

"It's an outstanding program," said Solum, 58, a former Navy commander.

Schuelke, 55, who retired in 1995 as an Air Force master sergeant, said the program gave her and her husband, also an Air Force veteran, a new life after retirement.

"It's awesome," said Schuelke, who earned a \$10,000 bonus through the program for teaching at a high-poverty school. "We came out of the military after 20 years, and we still had lots to offer."

Since its inception in 1994, Troops to Teachers has placed more than 11,500 veterans in school districts across America. But in recent years, the program has suffered because of a September 2005 rule change that has sharply reduced the number of schools where veterans could teach.

That trend could be reversed if Petri's and Matsui's legislation is adopted. The measure would restore the original criteria for eligibility, greatly expanding the number of eligible schools.

The Defense Department created the program to help members of the nation's armed forces start new careers as teachers in distressed public schools where their special skills and experiences are advantages.

See CLASSROOM, A-4

