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For Immediate Release - April 04, 2013

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MURRAY HIGHLIGHTS VETERANS' SERVICES AT HOLYOKE SOLDIERS' HOME

HOLYOKE – Thursday, April 4, 2013 – Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray today toured the Holyoke Soldiers' Home to highlight the Patrick-Murray Administration's continued commitment to supporting Massachusetts veterans. Lieutenant Governor Murray was joined on today's visit by Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) Secretary Coleman Nee for a meeting with Superintendent Paul Barabani and Board Chair Steve Como, followed by a tour of the facility.

"Massachusetts is proud to support and honor all of our veterans," said Lieutenant Governor Murray, Chair of the Governor's Council on Veterans' Services. "The Holyoke Soldiers' Home provides critical services for veterans throughout western Massachusetts and we're committed to working with them and all providers to ensure veterans receive the high quality care and benefits they deserve."

Governor Deval Patrick's Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 budget includes an increase in funding by nearly 7 percent for veterans' services and 3.3 percent for the Holyoke Soldiers' Home. Last month, Governor Patrick also filed a capital supplemental bill and a series of multi-year bond bills that will support the FY2013-2017 Capital Investment

Plan. The plan continues the Patrick-Murray Administration's efforts to grow jobs and economic opportunity through strategic investments in the Commonwealth's infrastructure. If passed by the legislature, the Administration will have the authorization to consider funding future projects at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home. All projects would be eligible for federal funding matches of 65 percent if approved by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and DVS are beginning a study to be completed in 2013 which will consider all options for potential renovations and expansion of services.

"I am proud to be part of an Administration that leads the nation in its support of those who serve our country," said EOHHS Secretary John Polanowicz. "The Patrick-Murray Administration has consistently made veterans and military families a priority, as exhibited in Governor Patrick's budget, in which veteran's services would see an increase in funding to ensure that every generation of Massachusetts' veterans has access to the benefits they deserve."

Over the last six years, the Patrick-Murray Administration has increased funding for the Department of Veterans' Services and Soldiers' Homes in Holyoke and Chelsea by 47 percent or \$42.5 million. This increased funding supports care and services for the rising number of veterans and their families in Massachusetts.

"The Patrick-Murray Administration has continued to keep veterans issues at the forefront," said Secretary Nee. "I look forward to working closely with Superintendent Barabani to ensure the Holyoke Soldiers Home is providing the finest services to our veterans for years to come."

Among the range of services for veterans supported by the Patrick-Murray Administration, Secretary Polanowicz joined veterans and local officials for the grand opening of the Veterans' Assistance Center at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke earlier this year. The new Veterans' Assistance Center provides veterans and their family members with information and assistance on eligibility and application for state and federal benefits, disability services, community referrals and interaction with veteran service agents. Those served include residents of the Soldiers' Home, those using out-patient or dental services, veterans from communities throughout western Massachusetts and veterans returning from conflict overseas. The center is staffed with certified service officers from the Disabled American Veterans Chapters of Holyoke, West Springfield and Agawam and the Bilingual Veterans Outreach Center of Springfield.

In addition to the new Veterans' Assistance Center at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, the Patrick-Murray Administration, with the support of the state legislature, also authorized \$671,000 during FY 2012 to provide 12 additional beds to serve veterans at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home. Recognizing dental care as a major unmet need for veterans, the Administration also worked with the Home in 2011 to reopen the Holyoke Dental Clinic that now serves veterans throughout western Massachusetts. Additionally, following Governor Patrick's call in 2012 for a comprehensive plan to address and treat Alzheimer's disease for patients in Massachusetts, the Holyoke Soldiers' Home has been at the forefront of providing early detection, education and care for veterans and their families affected by Alzheimer's disease.

The Patrick-Murray Administration leads the nation in providing for our veterans. In addition to the Governor's proposed FY 2014 budget and improvements at the Holyoke Soldiers Home, the Administration continues to implement initiatives to

support employment assistance and workforce training programs for members of the armed forces, veterans and their spouses. Most recently, the Administration announced that all state agencies that oversee professional licensing within the Administration have established guidelines to assist members of the armed forces, veterans and their spouses as they prepare and apply for jobs in Massachusetts. In early March, Governor Patrick also signed [an executive order to help small businesses owned by disabled veterans](#) increase access to contracts for public projects in the areas of construction, design and goods and services procurement. This executive order also follows the Governor's authorization of the VALOR Act to provide greater assistance to help veteran-owned small business participate in public projects. In 2011, the Administration launched an aggressive employment campaign aimed to increase the hiring of Massachusetts veterans. Among these initiatives, the Patrick-Murray Administration partnered with major trade associations to encourage them to hire veterans and circulate information on veterans' benefits.

To learn more about services for Massachusetts veterans, visit www.mass.gov/veterans.

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