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## Senator Daniel Inouye: A Legacy of Service

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Senator Daniel Inouye's lifelong commitment to service and advocacy for psychology as a profession has resulted in the betterment of mental healthcare for Americans across civilian and military settings. He remains the only person in our nation's history to be awarded both the Medal of Honor and the Presidential Medal of Freedom through his service as a combat Soldier and his 50 years in the United States Senate (Featured Senate Bios, n.d.) Additionally, he is the namesake for the Hawaii Psychological Association's award for contributions to psychology by a non-psychologist ([hawaiipsychology.org](http://hawaiipsychology.org)). He championed interdisciplinary professional parity for psychologists and promoted legislation to that end. Through his efforts, psychologists are now viewed as independent providers on par with other medical providers (i.e., medical doctors) within the Department of Defense (DoD) and throughout the federal criminal justice system, are directly compensable through Medicare and Medicaid, and may now serve as Surgeon General of the United States (Inouye, 1984). He is perhaps most recognized for the first known legislature to publicly promote prescriptive authority for psychologists (RxP). Senator Daniel Inouye embodies many of the very values the Society for Military Psychology holds most sacred and has demonstrated a commitment to the profession that is exceptionally rare among non-psychologists.

[Daniel Inouye's](#) life of service to the military and the greater nation was ignited in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. At the age of 17, Inouye served as a medical volunteer treating casualties of the infamous attack and furthering his personal interest in practicing medicine (Bamford, [2020](#)). Despite discriminatory practices levied against US citizens of Japanese descent (i.e., internment camps; see Hansen, [2018](#), for further reading), Inouye enlisted in the U.S. Army immediately after the enlistment ban for Japanese Americans was lifted. Inouye was assigned to the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in Italy which became one of the most decorated military units in U.S. history despite substantial casualties sustained (Featured Senate Bios, n.d.). As a result of his exceptional bravery and leadership in combat during the rescue of the "Lost Battalion" in October 1944, Inouye earned a rare field commission and was promoted to Second Lieutenant, as well as being awarded the Bronze Star. In April of 1945, the 442nd Regiment initiated an assault on German troops in San Terenzo, Italy. Despite the mission success, Inouye suffered the loss of his right arm (see Bamford, [2020](#)). His heroism on that day earned him the Distinguished Service Cross and a second award of the Purple Heart (see Bamford, [2020](#) for inspiring details on how he earned these honors). In 2000, President Bill Clinton upgraded Inouye's award of

the Distinguished Service Cross to the Medal of Honor. Daniel Inouye was honorably discharged as a Captain and returned to the Territory of Hawaii in 1947 after an extended rehabilitation stay at Percy Jones Army Hospital.

Losing his right arm ended his dream to become a surgeon; therefore, Daniel Inouye turned away from medicine toward law. He completed his BA in Political Science in 1950. He then enrolled in George Washington University where he earned a Juris Doctor in 1953. Inouye practiced law in Hawaii until he was elected to the Hawaiian Territorial House of Representatives in 1953, where he served as majority leader. During 1959, the same year that Hawaii became a U.S. State, Inouye was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served until 1962, when he was elected to the U.S. Senate. It was during his time in the U.S. Senate when Inouye made his greatest contributions to psychology.

Senator Inouye was a longstanding advocate for the application of psychological science, and his actions have vastly changed the landscape of our profession as a whole. Whether a psychologist works in private practice in a civilian setting, as a forensic psychologist or as a military psychologist, there is no doubt that, whether they know it or not, they have greatly benefited from Senator Inouye's efforts in congress. In 1978, Inouye was asked to be the keynote speaker at the Hawaii Psychological Association's Annual Convention. During the opening line of his speech, he commended his longtime advisor, psychologist, Pat DeLeon, for DeLeon's substantial contributions in informing his legislative agenda regarding mental healthcare. Pat DeLeon went on to serve as the American Psychological Association president in 2000 and is undoubtedly deserving of his own column in this newsletter. In his address to psychologists in Hawaii, Senator Inouye went on to highlight multiple initiatives his administration had taken on to address concerns of psychologists. He advocated for services rendered by psychologists to be reimbursable directly and not subsumed under a physician's oversight, and he added language that included "psychologically necessary" to appropriations bills related to federal spending and compensation (Inouye, 1978 p.3). These actions furthered the Senators commitment to consider psychologists as independent providers.

Six years later in 1984, Senator Inouye was again invited to give the keynote speech at the Hawaiian Psychological Association's conference. During his address, the senator highlighted substantial successes in parity for psychologists. As chairman of the Department of Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, he advocated for additional language that included "psychological necessity" (Inouye, 1984, p. 2), furthered autonomy in practice for psycholo-

gists, and, as noted above, promoted compensation under both Medicare and Medicaid for psychologists. Thanks to his efforts, psychologists are now able to serve as U.S. Surgeon General. Additionally, the senator furthered forensic psychology in particular, providing “complete parity” (Inouye, 1984, p. 6) throughout the federal criminal code, which was modified to include psychologists as opposed to psychiatrists only (Inouye, 1984). While any one of these accomplishments would have been reason enough to be recognized, it is of note that his speech would set in motion one of the most important and controversial initiatives in psychology for the next 30 years: prescriptive authority (see Curtis, Hoffman & O’Leary Sloan, 2023). In his address, he shared his views and goals: “In my judgement, when you [psychologists] have obtained this statutory authority, you will have really made the big time. Then, you truly will be an autonomous profession and your clients will be well-served” (Inouye, 1984, p. 4).

## History of RxP

Senator Inouye’s call to extend prescriptive authority to psychologists (RxP) was fueled by a deep commitment to making mental healthcare more accessible to Americans, particularly given the shortage of trained mental health prescribers at the time (DeLeon, Fox, & Graham, 1991). The following year after Senator Inouye’s speech, the [Hawaii Psychological Association](#) introduced the first state bill seeking prescriptive authority for psychologists. Although it was unsuccessful, momentum continued to build for the RxP movement. In 1991, American Psychological Association (APA) staff joined the Department of Defense Blue Ribbon Panel to create appropriate curricula for what would be called the Psychopharmacology Demonstration Project (PDP), which trained its first two Navy psychologists. By 1995, the American Psychological Association publicly endorsed prescriptive authority for psychologists with proper training (Cullen & Neman, 1997). In 1998 the final of four cohorts graduated from the PDP which granted ten total military psychologists prescriptive authority. Next, Guam passed the Collaborative Practices Act which granted limited RxP in 1999 which was followed by New Mexico’s Governor Gary Johnson who signed an RxP law in 2002. Similar legislation was passed granting RxP in Louisiana in 2004, Illinois in 2014, Iowa in 2016, and Idaho in 2017 (APA, 2023). Colorado became the sixth and most recent state to pass RxP in 2023. As of 2022, there are more than 200 prescribing psychologists serving in the United States across a wide range of settings including the Air Force, Army, Navy, Public Health Service, Indian Health Service, and civilian settings (Curtis, Hoffman, O’Leary Sloan, 2023).

Senator Inouye’s life of service and commitment to professional psychology has resulted in the betterment of mental healthcare across the nation in both military and civilian settings. Across more than 50 years in the Senate he has introduced and promoted legislature which has further solidified the professional standing of psycholo-

gists in the DoD, federal criminal system, and the private sector. As a result of his advocacy, psychologists have prescriptive authority in five states and the territory of Guam, patients have greater access to appropriate mental healthcare, psychologists are directly compensable, and are able to practice independently with interdisciplinary parity with other healthcare providers. In addition to being the only recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Medal of Honor Senator Daniel Inouye has demonstrated a commitment to psychology and the mental healthcare of Americans that is truly inspirational.

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