



For God and Country

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April 11, 2005

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
173 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4704

Dear Senator Murray:

Thank you for offering an amendment to the H.R. 1268, FY 2005 emergency supplemental appropriations, to add \$2 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical care. VA medical care is truly the ongoing cost of war. You have The American Legion's full support.

VA is not meeting the health care needs of America's veterans. Currently, certain veterans are actually denied access to the VA health care system even though they are willing to make co-payments and have third-party health care insurance, while others face lengthy delays in accessing care. Although providing quality health care, VA cannot meet its own timely access standards simply because it lacks the health care professionals to meet the demand for services.

In 2003, the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery For Our Nation's Veterans cited "eliminating the mismatch between demand and funding" as a major obstacle. Last year, VA officials claimed to need between 10 and 14 percent annual increases just to maintain current services because of Federal payraises and medical inflation. VA health care is still the best value for the taxpayer's dollar.

As former active-duty service members, especially National Guard and Reservists, transition to their civilian lifestyles, many new veterans will turn to VA to address their health care concerns, especially those with mental health problems associated with combat. VA is a world leader in effective treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other readjustments problems. VA must be funded to make sure this newest generation of wartime veterans are properly cared for in a timely manner and not displace other veterans seeking care due simply to limited resources.

Once again, thank you for offering an amendment to add \$2 billion for VA medical care. Timely access to VA medical care is an earned benefit from a grateful nation.

Sincerely,

Steve Robertson, Director
National Legislative Commission