

January 15, 2010

The Honorable Daniel Akaka
Chairman
Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Bob Filner
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Steve Buyer
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Mike Michaud
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Henry E. Brown, Jr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Veterans Affairs

Dear Chairmen Akaka, Filner and Michaud, and Ranking Members Burr, Buyer and Brown:

The undersigned organizations are writing to underscore the critical importance of the health-care issues on which the committees focused their legislative work last session, and to urge that you give the highest priority to the earliest possible joint deliberation and resolution of those issues embodied in S. 1963, *the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2009*, and House-passed H.R. 3155, H.R. 1211, H.R. 1293, H.R. 2770 and other companion measures.

As you are aware, the Senate passed S. 1963 by a recorded vote of 98-0 and the House passed each of its bills with similar provisions by unanimous consent under suspension of the House rules. This unanimity of bicameral, bipartisan congressional backing demonstrates overwhelming support for addressing the issues in these measures and assures positive votes on the compromise bill. As indicated by the large number of organizations signing below, and the millions of individuals they represent collectively, there is also tremendous public support.

Successful completion of the important work begun in your Committees – in some cases years ago - will make a profound difference to the well-being, rehabilitation and recovery of veterans across this country, including veterans wounded and disabled in Iraq and Afghanistan. It would be tragic if the promise inspired by your hard work last year -- including support for their caregivers, improving women veterans' care, and easing veterans' access to mental health services and homeless aid -- were deferred.

We urge you to keep in mind that by their yeas votes, Members of the full House and Senate have already vividly demonstrated their support for these programs while remaining fully cognizant of the Congressional Budget Office cost estimates associated with these proposals.

Once again, the undersigned organizations urge you to expeditiously complete a joint agreement and final votes at the earliest possible opportunity so that veterans may benefit from the many worthwhile provisions in this legislation.

Thank you for your leadership in veterans' affairs and commitment to the welfare of our nation's veterans. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Pain Medicine
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
The American Legion
American College of Emergency Physicians
American Optometric Association
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
AMVETS
Blinded Veterans Association
Catholic War Veterans, USA
Council on Social Work Education
Disabled American Veterans
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
Jewish War Veterans
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics
National Association for Uniformed Services
National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists
National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
Nurses Organization of VA
Pain Care Coalition
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Society for Women's Health Research
United Spinal Association
Veterans Affairs Physician Assistant Association
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
VetsFirst
Vietnam Veterans of America
Wounded Warrior Project

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