

The American Legion
1608 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 861-2700
www.legion.org

AMVETS (American Veterans)
4647 Forbes Blvd.
Lanham, MD 20706
(301) 459-9600
www.amvets.org

Blinded Veterans Association
477 H Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 371-8880
www.bva.org

Disabled American Veterans
807 Maine Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20024
(202) 554-3501
www.dav.org

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
308 Massachusetts Ave NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 544-7692
www.iava.org

Jewish War Veterans of the USA
1811 R Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 265-6280
www.jwv.org

Military Officers Association of America
201 N. Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 549-2311
www.moaa.org

Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.
5413-B Backlick Road
Springfield, VA 22151
(703) 642-5360
www.purpleheart.org

Paralyzed Veterans of America
801 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 872-1300
www.pva.org

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
200 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 543-2239
www.vfw.org

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
8605 Cameron Street, Suite 400
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 585-4000
www.vva.org

February 27, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the millions of veterans represented by the veterans and military service organizations that have joined our effort, we write to express our serious concerns about a policy proposal that has been discussed this week in conjunction with the release of your first budget. We have been told that your Administration may be considering a proposal that would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system to bill a veteran's insurance for the care and treatment of a disability or injury that was determined to have been incurred in or the result of the veteran's honorable military service to our country. Such a consideration is wholly unacceptable and a total abrogation of our government's moral and legal responsibility to the men and women who have sacrificed so much for our freedoms.

As you know, the mission of the VA is "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." Similarly, the VA emphasizes that it will "provide veterans the world-class benefits and services they have earned—and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship." Unfortunately, the proposal to bill veterans for the care of their service-connected disabilities ignores the most important aspect of this vision—that their care has been earned.

This proposal ignores the solemn obligation that this country has to care for those men and women who have served this country with distinction and were left with the wounds and scars of that service. The blood spilled in service for this nation is the premium that service-connected veterans have paid for their earned care.

We understand and accept that the VA bills third-party insurers of veterans who are treated for non-service connected conditions. However, we cannot and would not agree to any proposal that would expand this concept any further. There is simply no logical explanation for billing a veteran's personal insurance for care that the VA has a responsibility to provide. While we understand the fiscal difficulties this country faces right now, placing the burden of those fiscal problems on the men and women who have already sacrificed a great deal for this country is unconscionable. If in fact your Administration is considering this proposal, we would like to meet with

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you, as well as VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Peter Orzag, to discuss this further.

We strongly urge your Administration to drop consideration of any proposal to bill third-party insurers for veterans' service-connected conditions. We appreciate your continued emphasis on caring for the men and women who have served in defense of this country, as evidenced by the significant increase provided for VA programs in your FY 2010 budget submission. You can reaffirm this commitment by not allowing such a proposal to be carried forward. We stand ready to work with you, Secretary Shinseki, OMB Director Orzag, and others in your Administration to ensure that appropriate care and benefits are provided to those who have earned and deserve it.

Sincerely,



David K. Rehbein
National Commander
The American Legion



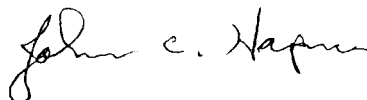
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Randy L. Pleva, Sr.
National President
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Glen M. Gardner, Jr.
Commander-in-Chief
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United
States



John Rowan
National President
Vietnam Veterans of America

Cc: Eric Shinseki, Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
Peter Orzag, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader
Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader
Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
Honorable Steny Hoyer, House Majority Leader
Honorable John Boehner, House Minority Leader
Honorable Daniel Akaka, Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Honorable Bob Filner, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Honorable Steve Buyer, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs