

NEWS RELEASE

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Legislation Critical to Veterans and Families

WASHINGTON—The Disabled American Veterans applauds the House of Representatives for approving the Caregiver and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act and strongly urges the Senate to quickly give final approval to the measure. This legislative package creates a comprehensive new program to support family caregivers of severely disabled veterans and strengthens VA health care programs for women veterans, homeless veterans, veterans with mental health needs and veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury. The Senate passed its version of the bill (S. 1963) last November by a vote of 98 to 0, and today a negotiated version was approved by the House 419 to 0. Senate approval is needed before the bill goes to the President for his signature.

“This measure will help ensure that women veterans, who have played an increasingly essential role in our military, receive quality, timely and gender-appropriate health care services from the Department of Veterans Affairs equal in every respect to that afforded male veterans,” said National Commander Bobby Barrera.

“Provisions in this broad-ranging legislation originated from other bills that address a number of DAV’s high-priority legislative goals,” said Commander Barrera. Major components of the omnibus bill provide benefits to family members caring for severely disabled veterans, improve medical services for women veterans and expand outreach to homeless veterans and mental health services for active duty, National Guard and Reservists.

“Legislation to provide support and assistance to caregivers of severely injured veterans has long been a priority for the DAV,” said Barrera. “The most severely injured will need caregivers in the home, especially in rural areas, where health care services are often limited, and the burden of caring for the severely injured falls on veterans’ families.”

This bill provides caregivers of severely disabled veterans with health care, counseling, support and respite care. In addition, the measure provides a stipend to family caregivers of disabled veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Provisions expanding health care services for women veterans include a requirement that the VA report to Congress on its comprehensive assessment of services and programs for women veterans and submit a plan on how it will address any shortfalls. The VA also is required to provide readjustment services to women veterans and must train its mental health professionals in the treatment of military sexual trauma.

“Reports have indicated that the care provided to women veterans through the VA often falls short on many fronts,” Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-S.D.) said. “By passing this legislation, we are beginning to develop new systems that will ultimately better provide for the health care of women veterans — especially those who were sexually assaulted, suffer from PTSD or who need child care services. The Disabled American Veterans has shown great leadership in this effort, and I thank them for their continued support of this important legislation.”

“This legislative package is too important to our nation’s veterans and their families for Congress to delay final passage,” said Barrera. “Passage of this bill will send a clear message that our government is honoring its obligation to our nation’s veterans and support to family caregivers of severely wounded, as well as efforts to end the tragedy of homeless veterans.”

The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans, a non-profit organization founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932, represents this nation’s disabled veterans. It is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for our nation’s disabled veterans and their families. More information is available at www.dav.org.

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