

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

June 22, 2007

The Honorable Pete Domenici
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barack Obama
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Domenici and Obama:

On behalf of the 2.4 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW) and our Auxiliaries, I would like to offer our strong support for legislation you introduced--S. 38, the *Veterans Mental Health Outreach and Access Act*. This legislation recognizes the important readjustment and mental health needs of veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially those who have difficulty accessing VA health care facilities.

This important legislation would create a program to offer mental health services and peer support to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, including those who served in the National Guard and in the Reserves. Another key aspect of the legislation is that it would offer supportive services to certain family members of these veterans. Offering family support is a critical but often overlooked part of the transition service members face as they return from Active Duty, and we are pleased to see it included.

We are also pleased to see that the legislation would extend the number of years that a veteran returning from a combat theater is eligible for VA health care from the current two years up to five years. With the difficulty of accessing care and the adjustments veterans must make to their lives, especially if they are coming to terms with some mental illnesses or emotional difficulties, extra time for eligibility is completely appropriate.

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We thank you for your leadership in the introduction of this important legislation, and we look forward to working with your offices to ensure its success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis M. Cullinan", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

DENNIS M. CULLINAN, Director
National Legislative Service