

May 17, 2016

Honorable Jeff Miller, Chairman  
House Veterans' Affairs Committee  
335 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Corrine Brown, Ranking Member  
House Veterans' Affairs Committee  
333 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Brown:

On behalf of the millions of veterans we represent, including their families and survivors, we write to urge you to include in the legislative hearing on May 24, 2016 before the full committee, legislation that would expand the eligibility of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.


In 2010, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act (P.L. 111-163) was enacted to provide comprehensive caregiver support to caregivers of veterans severely injured or disabled after September 11, 2001. While this program has proven its value to thousands of post-9/11 veterans and their caregivers, millions of veterans remain ineligible for this benefit because their service took place before September 11, 2001.


In March, we called on Congress to enact legislation this year that will expand the number of caregivers eligible for the comprehensive caregiver benefit to the maximum level feasible, without reducing existing veterans' benefits and services. The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee recently passed the Veterans First Act, which includes provisions to improve and strengthen VA's comprehensive caregiver assistance program, and reasonably expands eligibility for older generations of severely injured veterans in a phased approach. Our organizations believe it is absolutely critical that these provisions are enacted by Congress before the end of the year.

With a shortened Congressional calendar in this election year, we recognize there is limited time to make progress on these and other critical priorities for America's veterans. As leaders of the nation's prominent veterans and military organizations, we pledge to work with you and the VA to find common ground so we can properly fund this program and advance legislation to ensure all severely injured men and women who have served and their caregivers receive the supports and services they need.

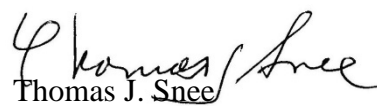
Respectfully,

  
Joseph R. Chenelly  
Executive Director  
AMVETS


  
Al Avina  
Executive Director  
Blinded Veterans Association



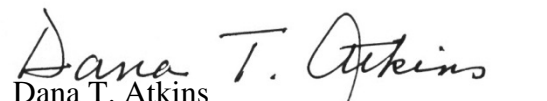
Garry J. Augustine  
Executive Director, Washington Headquarters  
DAV (Disabled American Veterans)




Thomas J. Snee  
National Executive Director  
Fleet Reserve Association




Herb Rosenbleeth  
Herb Rosenbleeth  
National Executive Director  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA



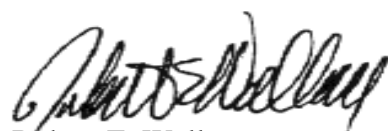
Dana T. Atkins  
Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)  
President  
Military Officers Association of America




Ernesto P. Hernandez, III  
National Adjutant  
Military Order of the Purple Heart



Sherman Gillums, Jr.  
Executive Director  
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Robert E. Wallace  
Executive Director  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
of the United States



Rick Weidman  
Executive Director for Policy  
and Government Affairs  
Vietnam Veterans of America