

FEB 27 2009



DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

*Building Better Lives for America's Disabled Veterans*

February 10, 2009

The Honorable John Hall  
United States House of Representatives  
1217 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hall:

I am writing on behalf of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), a congressionally chartered national veterans' service organization with 1.3 million members, all of whom were disabled while serving on active duty in the United States armed forces. The DAV works to rebuild the lives of disabled veterans and their families.

Chairman Hall, we have once again discussed your groundbreaking legislation that, if enacted would clarify certain standards to determine combat-veteran status. We continue to support this important legislation during this new session of Congress as we did during the last session.

Service connection for PTSD still requires a veteran to show combat exposure via official military records, except in certain circumstances, such as a diagnosis during service. For many veterans, providing such documentation remains a virtual impossibility because of poor military record keeping, poor VA claims' development procedures, or both.

As VBA updates its rating criteria to incorporate a 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding of PTSD, it too must update its ability, whether through application or through presumption, to determine who is, or is not, considered a combat veteran. Your legislation brings attention to the reality of having to deny compensation to a veteran suffering from PTSD because his/her government refuses to accept that he/she actually saw combat with the enemy. Nothing could be more demoralizing to a combat veteran.

The DAV looks forward to working with this session of Congress on this important legislation. Chairman Hall, with careful stewardship, this legislation will improve the lives of disabled veterans for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kerry L. Baker", is written over a horizontal line.

KERRY L. BAKER  
Assistant National Legislative Director

KLB:acd