



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

July 13, 2009

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

RE: Support for H.R. 952, the "COMBAT PTSD Act"

Dear Congressman Hall,

I write on behalf of *Swords to Plowshares*, a community based non-profit Veterans Service Organization founded by Vietnam veterans in 1974 and dedicated to providing supportive services to veterans of all eras. *Swords to Plowshares* would like to express our strong support for H.R. 952, the "COMBAT PTSD Act" clarifying the meaning of "combat with the enemy" for the purpose of establishing service-connection of disabilities. This bill spares thousands of veterans deployed to war zones the unnecessary stress they must endure in order to meet the burden of *proof* required to connect Post Traumatic Stress to military service, even after being diagnosed as having PTSD by the VA. Specifically, this bill will establish service in a combat theater as a presumptive stressor by defining "combat with the enemy," as active service "in a theater of combat operations during a period of war . . . or in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities."

This outstanding piece of legislation recognizes the realities of modern warfare and the effect it has on the men and women in combat operations. As you know, thousands of veterans have been forced to fight for benefits already earned because of insufficient evidence; too often due to inadequate recordkeeping outside the control of the veteran seeking disability benefits. In fact, while more than 100,000 OIF/OEF veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD, only 42,000 have been granted service-connected disability for their condition. Moreover, as the backlog of disability claims approaches a staggering one million, it is all the more necessary to remove the bureaucratic red tape which prevents veterans from receiving the full benefits they have earned.

On behalf of *Swords to Plowshares*, I thank you for introducing the "COMBAT PTSD Act" and for your leadership in ensuring our disabled veterans receive the benefits they deserve. Please contact us if you need any assistance in getting this critical bill signed into law.

Sincerely,

Michael Blecker
Executive Director