

**VETERANS**  
FOR COMMON SENSE

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**Veterans for Common Sense**

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February 10, 2009

The Honorable John Hall  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs  
Veterans' Affairs Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1217 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hall:

Veterans for Common Sense (VCS) strongly endorses your legislation designed to clarify the definition of combat, and thereby make it easier for veterans to receive disability compensation benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Under the current VA claims system, nearly every veteran must individually prove their combat service and specific incidents known as "stressors" before receiving VA disability benefits for PTSD. The burdensome and adversarial VA regulations consistently cause delays of months, and often years, needlessly increases the economic distress suffered by veterans already trying to cope with PTSD.

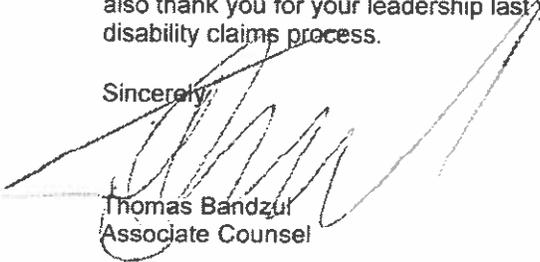
In 2008, the Institute of Medicine concluded that deployment to a war zone is linked to the development of PTSD. This type of strong and overwhelming scientific evidence has been accepted by the government in connection with illnesses associated with Agent Orange poisoning among Vietnam War veterans.

Your superb bill seeks to cut the red tape and allow valid disability claims to be more easily processed by VA. This is exceptionally important because of our current economic recession. Your legislation should have a profound impact on Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. Of the 105,000 recent war veterans diagnosed by VA with PTSD, only 42,000 received disability benefits from VA for PTSD. That means up to 63,000 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans may see prompt relief with the passage of your landmark legislation. Tens of thousands of veterans from prior wars also await answers from VA for their PTSD claims. In this time of recession and high unemployment among veterans, our veterans should not be forced to fight an adversarial VA system for assistance for debilitating war-related psychological injuries.

Based on scientific evidence, a prompt move by Congress to properly define combat and thereby cut the red tape on PTSD claims will also serve as a strong message to reduce stigma. An official recognition of PTSD evidences public support for our veterans and families trying to readjust after fighting in combat. We have already contacted VA Secretary Eric Shinseki in support of streamlining PTSD claims.

On behalf of our 14,400 members, we offer our heartfelt thanks and appreciation for your new bill. We also thank you for your leadership last year passing landmark legislation to streamline the overall VA disability claims process.

Sincerely,



Thomas Bandzur  
Associate Counsel

*Veterans for Common Sense provides advocacy and publicity about policies related to veterans' healthcare, veterans' disability benefits, national security, and civil liberties. VCS is recognized by the IRS as a non-profit 501(c)3 charity, and donations are tax deductible.*