

May 24, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Since the beginning of the 118th Congress, we, the undersigned organizations, have been working with the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs on legislation to improve the health care and benefits provided to our nation's veterans, their caregivers, their families, and their survivors. Over the course of many months, our collective engagement with Members and staff through congressional hearings, committee briefings, stakeholder roundtables, and informal discussions have led to the development of bills that address several of our highest legislative priorities for those we serve.

We were pleased to see many of these bills incorporated into the recently introduced Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (H.R. 8371). From improving access to mental health and long-term care for the veterans who need it, to supporting those who care for them, as well as their survivors, this bipartisan and bicameral measure would have a tremendous impact on the entire veteran community if enacted. We have been patient and collaborative as these proposals have been reviewed and adjusted to fit into a meticulously crafted legislative package. The time to act has arrived.

We recognize that this legislation is a compromise package, one that requires all sides and interested parties to engage in good faith, as we did with the House and Senate committees. We appreciated receiving regular updates from committee staff as this omnibus package progressed, and were pleased to help resolve many differences throughout the entire process leading to the introduction of this bill. We assumed committee leaders were doing the same as the negotiations moved behind closed doors. As engaged and involved stakeholders, we were deeply disappointed to learn that the bill will not advance to the House floor for a vote before Memorial Day.

While the path forward for this bill is now unclear, we continue to stand united in our belief that Congress must pass this vital legislation as quickly as possible. The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act addresses some of the most urgent needs of veterans and the people who care for them; they should not have to wait any longer. On their behalf, we call on all of you to put aside politics, work together in good faith to find a path forward through the House and the Senate, and enact this critical legislation before the Fourth of July. America's veterans, their caregivers, families and survivors deserve no less.

Cc: House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee

Sincerely,



Carl Blake
Chief Executive Officer
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Daniel Seehafer
National Commander
The American Legion



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Executive Director
VFW Washington Office



Edward R. Reese, Jr
Executive Director
DAV Washington Headquarters



Steve Schwab
Chief Executive Officer
Elizabeth Dole Foundation



Brian T. Kelly
Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force (Ret)
President and CEO
Military Officers Association of America
(MOAA)



Jose Ramos
Vice President for Government
and Community Relations
Wounded Warrior Project



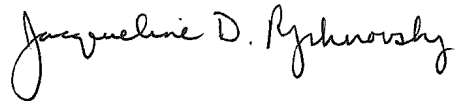
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National Executive Director
Blinded Veterans Association



Cara Rinkoff
USAWOA Executive Director



Allison Jaslow
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Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of
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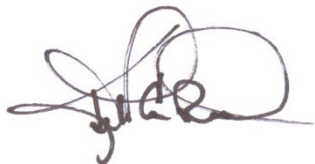
Deborah Oelschig
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The ALS Association



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Secretary, Board of Directors
Airmen Memorial Foundation



Carder Ferguson
National Commander
Military Order of the Purple Heart USA



James McCormick
Director, Government Affairs
Vietnam Veterans of America

Additional Supporting Organizations:

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Team Services Group
I AM ALS
National PACE Association
U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association & Enlisted Association
Military Chaplains Association
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors