

***Legislation was included in the Honoring America's Veterans Act that passed both the House and Senate with unanimous bipartisan support***

**Washington, DC** – Today, legislation introduced by Congressman Tim Walz to improve rehabilitation services for veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI) passed the House of Representatives and will head to the President's desk to be signed into law. The legislation, first introduced by Walz in May of 2011, was included in the larger *Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012*, introduced by Chairman of the VA Committee, Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL). The bill passed the U.S. Senate unanimously earlier this month.

**“We owe it to our wounded warriors to give them the best care and support in the world,”** said Rep. Tim Walz, who is a 24 year veteran of the Army National Guard. **“When a veteran suffering from TBI comes to the VA for treatment, they need to be presented with a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation. One that will allow them to recover function, achieve independence, and fully integrate back into their communities. This bill ensures we provide the comprehensive care our wounded warriors need, instead of just physical rehabilitation currently available to them. I’m pleased it will be signed into law.”**

Due to advances in medicine, service members who would not have been expected to survive catastrophic attacks in previous conflicts are returning home today with unprecedented severe and complex injuries. Since 2001, over 1,500 service members have suffered from a severe TBI, many of whom require rehabilitative programs ranging from total care for the most basic needs to semi-independent living support. A restrictive approach to rehabilitation puts these wounded warriors at risk of losing any progress they made towards recovery.

Because of ambiguities in current law, TBI treatment at the Department of Veterans Affairs narrowly focuses TBI care on physical restoration. The Walz bill will ensure wounded warriors suffering from TBI receive a more comprehensive and holistic rehabilitation plan that focuses on physical restoration, mental health, independence, and quality of life. It would also help veterans in maintaining the gains they have made during initial phases of treatment by requiring the Department of Veterans' Affairs to develop rehabilitation plans that stress improved physical, cognitive, and vocational functioning in the long term.

The legislation is endorsed by the Wounded Warrior Project and the Blinded Veterans Association.

**"Many of our warriors have sustained traumatic brain injuries that require long-term rehabilitative care,"** said Wounded Warrior Project Executive Director Steve Nardizzi. **"This critical legislation will help ensure that needed rehabilitation is not prematurely cut off, and that these veterans can get the kind of support they need – whether those are health-services or non-medical community-based assistance – to achieve maximum independence."**

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