



T H E M I L I T A R Y C O A L I T I O N

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The Honorable John Warner
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

December 8, 2005

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed services and veterans' organizations, representing more than 5.5 million members plus their families and survivors, is writing to express our great concern about Department of Defense plans to shift additional health care costs to military beneficiaries.

In November, the Department unilaterally announced an 8.5% premium increase for TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) enrollees. The changes will go into effect next month, without any discussion or opportunity for congressional review or oversight. Guard and Reserve members and families who have been putting their lives and civilian careers on the line deserve better treatment. The Department has opposed the TRS initiative and delayed implementation as long as possible. The program is barely getting off the ground, and the Department already is imposing a significant cost increase on members and families who "already gave."

TMC believes that's only the beginning. For the last year, Defense leaders have asserted military beneficiaries should pay more of their health care costs, as is happening in the private sector. Now, we understand that DoD hopes to establish a retiree enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard, double or triple Standard deductibles and Prime enrollment fees, and raise pharmacy copays.

For the last two years, Congress has rejected substantial pharmacy copay increases and enrollment fees for the VA health care system. We believe no less consideration is due to those who are currently serving or who have served a career in uniform. TMC believes strongly that the Department needs to expend greater effort on reducing health costs by eliminating inefficiencies in administration, contracting, and procurement, rather than simply proposing such significant cost-shifting to beneficiaries. We stand ready to offer suggestions in these areas.

Congress has provided military retirement and health care benefits that exceed civilian benefits as an essential offset to the unique demands and sacrifices inherent in a military career, which far surpass the demands made on civilian workers. When recruiting is already a significant problem, and stresses on today's forces compel any thoughtful observer to see considerable retention and readiness

risks, TMC hopes Congress will agree that this is hardly a prudent time to impose further financial sacrifices on military beneficiaries – active duty, Guard or Reserve, or retired.

Congress has worked too hard to reverse the “erosion of benefits” mentality of the 1970s and 1990s to see that work undone. TMC hopes you agree that shifting more costs to those who already have sacrificed so much for our freedom is not a prudent action, especially when the Nation is at war.

Sincerely,
The Military Coalition
(Signatures enclosed)

Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
Air Force Women Officers Associated
American Logistics Association
AMVETS (American Veterans)
Army Aviation Association of America
Association of Military Surgeons of the United States
Association of the United States Army
Chief Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer Association, U.S. Coast Guard
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States
Fleet Reserve Association
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America
Marine Corps League
Marine Corps Reserve Association
Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
National Association for Uniformed Services
National Military Family Association
National Order of Battlefield Commissions
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
Naval Reserve Association
Non Commissioned Officers Association
Reserve Enlisted Association
Society of Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces
The Retired Enlisted Association
United Armed Forces Association
United States Army Warrant Officers Association
United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Veterans' Widows International Network