



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

201 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 838-8113

March 18, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of uniformed services and veterans associations representing more than 5.5 million current and former servicemembers and their families and survivors writes to express our very deep concern over an initiative we understand is being considered that would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to bill a veteran's private or employer-based insurance for care delivered in the VA for service-connected disabilities.

The Military Coalition is very grateful that your administration is requesting \$52.5 billion for the VA's discretionary accounts, a 10.3% increase over FY2009 enacted levels. Discounting estimated collections, your budget proposal marks the first time in the history of the Veterans Independent Budget (IB) that an administration is proposing a budget that exceeds the IB's recommendation. This level of funding will help to assure quality care delivery and access for our nation's veterans, including the enrollment of increasing numbers of 'Priority Group 8' veterans in the coming years.

But the Coalition is very troubled and disappointed that your administration is also actively considering allowing the VA to bill a veteran's private or employment-based insurance for the care and treatment of a disability or injury that was determined to have been incurred in or the result of honorable military service to our country.

The Military Coalition strongly recommends that you cancel any consideration of the concept of third-party billing for service-connected care in VA facilities. This idea is unacceptable and an abrogation of our government's moral and legal responsibility to the men and women who have sacrificed so much for our freedoms.

The mission of the VA is "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." The VA emphasizes that it "provide[s] veterans the world-class benefits and services they have earned . . . by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship." Unfortunately, any proposal to bill veterans

for the care of their service-connected disabilities would ignore the most important aspect of this vision—that their care has been earned.

TMC understands and accepts that the VA bills third-party insurers of veterans who are treated for non-service connected conditions. However, we cannot and would not agree to any proposal that would expand this concept further. There is simply no justification for billing a veteran's personal insurance for care that the VA has a responsibility to provide. While we understand the fiscal difficulties our country faces right now, placing the burden of those fiscal problems on the men and women who have already sacrificed a great deal for this country is unconscionable.

We strongly urge your administration to drop consideration of any proposal to bill third-party insurers for veterans' service-connected conditions. The Military Coalition is grateful for the significant increase in funding for the VA and we look forward to working with your administration to honor and serve all those who have worn the uniform of our nation.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition
(signatures enclosed)

Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
Air Force Women Officers Associated
American Logistics Association
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.
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
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 Guard Association of the United States
National Military Family Association
National Order of Battlefield Commissions
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
Naval Reserve Association
Non Commissioned Officers Association
Reserve Enlisted Association of the United States
Reserve Officers Association
The Retired Enlisted Association
United States Army Warrant Officers Association
United States Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States