

CASTLE SUPPORTS LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE VETERANS HEALTHCARE -- MAY 24, 2007

Washington, D.C. -- As the country prepares to celebrate Memorial Day next week, Delaware Congressman Mike Castle yesterday helped pass five bills that would improve healthcare for troops returning to the United States from service abroad. Since the discovery of poor management and facility upkeep at Walter Reed Army Medical Center earlier this year, Rep Castle has worked to enhance our nation's military health care system and to improve outreach and care services for America's veterans.

"The problems uncovered at Walter Reed highlighted many weaknesses in meeting the needs of our soldiers who return home injured. This legislation will improve the quality of care available to our veterans and ensure they have the resources and personnel necessary to provide the medical services these men and women deserve. As we approach Memorial Day, there is no better way for Congress to honor America's heroes," Castle said.

The following bills passed yesterday, with support from Congressman Castle:

- Veterans Outreach Improvement Act (H.R. 67)

- Establishes a program for the Veterans Affairs (VA) Department to provide assistance for outreach to veterans and their families, creates a grant program for the VA to provide financial assistance to states for outreach activities, and authorizes \$25 million a year from FY 2008-2010 for these activities

- Returning Servicemember VA Healthcare Insurance Act (H.R. 612)

- Extends free VA healthcare for soldiers who return from combat from two to five years after military release or discharge.

- Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans (H.R. 1470)

- Ensures that chiropractic care is available for all soldiers upon returning home from combat.

- Traumatic Brain Injury Health Enhancement & Long-Term Support Act (H.R. 2199)

- Authorizes new research centers for traumatic brain injuries and requires the establishment of a comprehensive program to treat traumatic brain injuries at VA Department health centers.

- Early Access to Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits (HR 2239)

- Extends eligibility for rehabilitation benefits from the VA Department to current members of the armed forces who are hospitalized or are receiving outpatient medical care, have a disability of at least 10% or aggravated whole on active duty, and who are likely to be discouraged from the service due to that disability. Under the current law, benefits were not available until after military personnel had been discharged.

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