

**Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission**  
*Established Pursuant to Public Law 108-136*

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Ray Wilburn, Executive Director

October 3, 2007

**Transmittal to:**

**The President of the United States**

**The President of the Senate**

**Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader, United States Senate**

**Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, United States Senate**

**Honorable Daniel K. Akaka, Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States Senate**

**Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States Senate**

**Honorable Carl Levin, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate**

**Honorable John McCain, Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate**

**Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U. S. House of Representatives**

**Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader, U. S. House of Representatives**

**Honorable John A. Boehner, Minority Leader, U. S. House of Representatives**

**Honorable Bob Filner, Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U. S. House of Representatives**

**Honorable Steve Buyer, Ranking Republican Member, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U. S. House of Representatives**

**Honorable Ike Skelton, Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, U. S. House of Representatives**

**Honorable Duncan L. Hunter, Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services, U. S. House of Representatives**

The Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission is pleased to submit to you our report, *Honoring the Call to Duty: Veterans' Disability Benefits in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The Commission's recommendations aim to ensure that disability benefits fairly compensate service-disabled veterans and their families, and help them live with dignity as they rehabilitate and reintegrate into civilian life.

The Commission was created to study the benefits and services intended to compensate and assist veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths attributable to

military service. To accomplish this undertaking, the Commission embarked upon a thorough, comprehensive, and objective analysis of the full range of benefit programs.

The Commission engaged the analytical support of two well-established research organizations, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies and CNA Corporation (CNAC) to provide a data-driven, evidence-based foundation for the findings and recommendations in this report. With contributions from IOM and CNAC, the Commission addressed the appropriateness and purpose of the benefits, the benefit levels and payment rates, and the processes and procedures used to determine eligibility.

Special attention was given to the care of the severely injured, treatment and compensation for posttraumatic stress disorder, transition from military service to civilian life, the rating schedule used to assess disability, the methodologies applied to establishing presumptive service-connection for disabilities, individual unemployability, and the timeliness of claims processing.

The Commission also conducted fact-finding visits to eight cities around the country, held public hearings, carried out surveys, and reviewed studies and research regarding programmatic and organizational improvements to the veterans' disability benefits system. As part of the public hearings, the Commission heard extensive testimony from veterans, advocates, and family members regarding the current veterans' disability system, as well as from directors, program managers and staff from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and other federal and state agencies and private sector experts.

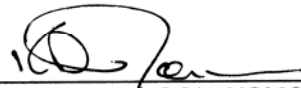
After more than two years of study, the Commission found that improvements are needed, in both the benefits received and the management and operation of the benefit programs. The recommendations of this report offer a way forward and practical solutions so that disabled veterans and their families receive appropriate, equitable, and consistent benefits honoring their service and sacrifices.

Sincerely,

  
JAMES TERRY SCOTT, LTG, USA (RET)  
Chairman



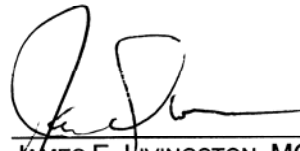
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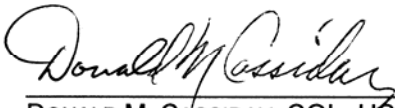
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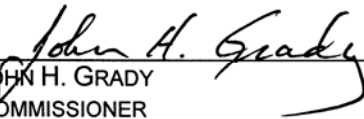
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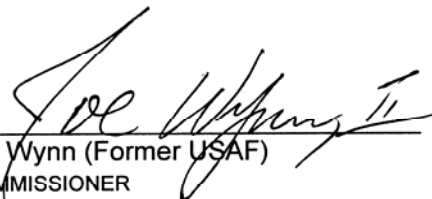
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