

MURRAY VA HEALTH CARE AMENDMENT -- FACT SHEET

April 12, 2005

- The amendment would add \$1.98 billion for veterans' health care enabling the VA to:
 - Absorb the influx of new veteran patients from Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom,
 - To reverse the current budget shortfall, and
 - To shore up veterans' mental health.
- \$610 million to care for returning servicemembers from Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.
- \$840 million -- \$40 million for each Veterans Service Integrated Network (VISN) -- to reverse current budget shortfalls and enable local VISNs to prepare for an influx of new veterans.
- \$525 million for mental health enhancements.
- The vast majority of servicemembers have not yet returned home, are rehabilitating in the DoD health care system, or are pending separation.
- Current law mandates that these men and women who have served in combat are eligible for two years of free VA care.
- By VA's own account, the amount spent on OEF/OIF veterans is projected to double from last year to this year.
- VA hospitals and clinics are experiencing devastating budget deficits.
 - Outpatient clinics ceasing to see even the poorest of patients. Nursing home beds are being eliminated. Hiring freezes are the norm. Old and broken equipment cannot be replaced.
- It was recently reported by VA that 30% of the men and women currently serving will suffer from some form of mental illness or readjustment issues.
- The amendment provides additional funds to improve the quality and availability of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder treatment, as well as other mental health services.
- The workload for Vet Centers (which provide outreach, readjustment and bereavement counseling to veterans and their families), has doubled, but funding has not kept pace with this increase in demand.
- While the Administration has continued to discount VA as being part of the ongoing costs of war, this amendment serves as a reminder that caring for the men and women who have served our country when they return home is as important as making sure they are taken care of while on the battlefield.