

'I'm just glad the Herald exposed how veterans are falling through the cracks.' — SEN. JOHN F. KERRY

Kerry: Publicize benefit for vets

By ANDREW MIGA

WASHINGTON — Sen. John F. Kerry, moved by the "heartbreaking" story of a cash-strapped North End veteran who lost both legs in Vietnam, is urging state officials to better publicize a little-known benefit to disabled vets.

Kerry was struck by the case of Paul Bartell, a Marine left legless after stepping on a booby trap in Vietnam in 1967 and whose plight was recounted in a column by the Herald's Mike Barnicle yesterday.

Bartell has been eligible since 1968 for the annual \$1,500 disability annuity, according to the state. But he was not aware he qualified until three years ago — and because the benefits are not granted retroactively, he lost out on \$13,000 over the years.

"I'm just glad the Herald exposed how veterans are falling through the cracks," Kerry said. "This is a test of our values as a state. We should be working across the aisle to

make sure every veteran in our state gets every penny they deserve for putting their bodies on the line for our freedom."

In a letter to Gov. Mitt Romney, Kerry (D-Mass.) urged state officials to promote the annual \$1,500 payment to 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans, Gold Star Parents and surviving spouses who have not remarried.

"It makes your blood boil to think we'd have disabled veterans getting lost in the shuffle, counting every last dime, choosing between putting food on the table and paying the bills, all because the government hasn't made sure they know what benefits are owed them," the senator said.

"With so many of our young men and women returning home from service in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is more important than ever before that we show our veterans that we will keep faith with their sacrifice to our country," Kerry said.



STAFF PHOTO BY MIKE ADASKAVEG

HEARTBREAKING: Disabled Marine veteran Paul Bartell wasn't aware he qualified for a \$1,500 annuity until three years ago, losing out on \$13,000 over the years.