March 27, 2007
(House Rules)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 1538 – Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007
(Rep. Skelton (D) Missouri and 28 cosponsors)

The Administration endorses the goals of the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007 but believes that this legislation is premature. The President established the Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors and the Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes to help ensure the most effective utilization of resources to provide the highest quality of care to those who served in the Global War on Terror. It would be preferable for Congress to wait for the recommendations of this Commission and Task Force – scheduled to report no later than July 31 – before legislating.

Furthermore, H.R. 1538 raises some concerns, including an objectionable provision that would impose a broad one-year moratorium on the initiation of new public-private competitions involving any function at any military medical facility. The Department of Defense should retain the full range of management tools to improve services at military medical facilities. The tailored application of competition at select military medical facilities allows the Department to use its full continuum of military, civilian, and contractor resources to ensure better operations, better quality accessible care to its patients, and optimal readiness and deployment capabilities. Numerous Administration reports provided to Congress on competitive sourcing issued over the past several years have documented the significant savings and improved management practices that have been achieved by the responsible use of public-private competition. For example, competitions completed over the last four years are expected to generate more than $6 billion in savings over the next 10 years.

The Administration looks forward to working with Congress on this bill as it moves forward and as the results of the Commission and Task Force become known.

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