

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) continued to fight for the best possible services for our veterans by becoming a cosponsor of the “Dignity in Care for Wounded Warriors” Act as well as sending a letter to the General Accountability Office (GAO) Comptroller General requesting an immediate and thorough assessment of the Administration’s long term plans for the care of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

“As a country, we have made a promise to our veterans –to provide for them when they return. I recently had an opportunity to visit with wounded soldiers recovering at the Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital,” Arcuri said. “Seeing first hand the devastating injuries that some of our brave soldiers have endured troubled me deeply. When I read accounts that these brave men and women have not received the best care we have to offer, I was horrified. The ‘Dignity in Care for Wounded Warriors’ Act would ensure that wounded service members receive the treatment, care and services that were promised to them. By holding the Administration accountable and by cosponsoring legislation in Congress, I will continue to make sure veterans receive the treatment they deserve, with honor and respect.”

Recently a series of articles ran in the *Washington Post* outlining neglect and mismanagement at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital. The *Washington Post* reported on moldy rooms, rodent infestations, lost paper work, mismanaged cases, and a host of other instances of neglect regarding care for soldiers recuperating from injuries sustained in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Below is a summary the “Dignity in Care for Wounded Warriors” Act introduced by Senators Barack Obama (D-IL) and Claire McCaskill (D-MO) and supported by a bipartisan group of Senators. A copy of the letter Arcuri sent to the GAO Comptroller General is also attached:

The “Dignity in Care for Wounded Warriors” Act:

- Establishes standards for military outpatient housing
- Brings the Physical Disability Evaluation System (PDES) under one command to reduce bureaucratic red tape and unnecessary delays in the processing of paperwork
- Increases the number of caseworkers and improves training of caseworkers responsible for recovering service members
- Extends paid medical leave of 3 months for family members who are caring for recovering service members so they do not have to choose between caring for their loved one and their job

- Creates an information hotline and other feedback outlets, such as town hall meetings, to increase information and assistance available to service members
- Creates a Wounded Warrior Oversight Group appointed by Congressional leadership that will oversee implementation of the act and serve as a constant advocate for recovering service members

Letter Sent to the Comptroller General:

The Honorable David M. Walker  
Comptroller General  
United States General Accounting Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Walker,

As new members of the House of Representatives, we are writing out of concern over recent press reports that have exposed glaring problems in the delivery of outpatient health care for recovering soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. As you know, this issue is now being investigated by various Congressional committees.

These reports raise broader questions about whether the federal government is prepared to meet the needs of all returning soldiers in addition to the ongoing needs of veterans of previous wars.

The situation at Building 18 is a clear indicator of a systemic failure in the delivery of quality outpatient health care and services to those who have bravely served our country. We are concerned that this failure may be the tip of the iceberg in terms of a lack of readiness for the significant needs of returning veterans, particularly in the context of the Administration's proposed reductions in the budget for the Veterans Administration.

We believe the cost of war must include caring for the warrior. To that end, we are asking the

General Accounting Office to conduct an independent assessment of the adequacy of the Administration's long term plans to provide the full range of necessary services for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars while continuing to care for veterans of previous wars.

A thorough examination of this issue is critical to ensure that we meet our moral obligation to those who have answered the call of duty. We look forward to working with you on this important study.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Arcuri  
Peter Welch  
Joe Sestak  
Paul Hodes  
Ciro D. Rodriguez  
Steve Kagen, MD  
Hank Johnson  
Joe Courtney  
Joe Donnelly

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