

May 5, 2010

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today welcomed the signing of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act (S. 1963), comprehensive legislation that will strengthen support for America's wounded warriors. Altmire voted for this legislation when it passed the House on April 21, 2010.

"In America today, there are thousands of veterans who have sustained life-altering injuries while fighting to protect their country," Altmire said. "By strengthening support for America's wounded warriors and their caregivers, we are both honoring the sacrifices they have made and helping them resume their lives here at home. Nothing is more important than ensuring that our nation's veterans have the support they need and deserve."

In 2007, a report issued by the Dole / Shalala Commission found that about 20 percent of active duty and 15 percent of reserve forces who were wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan had a family member or friend who was forced to leave a job to care for them full-time.

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act will provide the caregivers of disabled veterans with a wide range of support services, including training and education, counseling and mental health services, and respite care. Additionally, those caring for veterans of the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will receive lodging and subsistence payments when accompanying veterans on medical care visits, health care coverage, and a monthly stipend.

This legislation also takes steps to help ensure that veterans living in rural areas have access to quality health care. Specifically, it would direct the VA to create a grant program to help Veterans Service Organizations provide transportation for veterans in rural areas.

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