

(Washington, DC) - The House Veterans Affairs Committee approved the Traumatic Brain Injury Health Enhancement and Long-Term Support Act (H.R. 2199) yesterday, which incorporates legislation previously introduced by U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4) to ensure the proper treatment of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) of the nation's veterans.

Rep. Altmire introduced the Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Act (H.R. 1944) on April 20. H.R. 1944 would require the Veterans Affairs Administration to institute a program to screen veterans for symptoms of TBI; develop and operate a comprehensive program of long-term care for post-acute TBI rehabilitation; establish a TBI transition office at each of the 21 polytrauma network sites nationwide; and create and maintain a TBI veteran health registry. All of the provisions of H.R. 1944 were included as part of H.R. 2199, legislation introduced by Veteran Affairs Health Subcommittee Chair Michael Michaud (ME-02).

"Traumatic brain injury has become the signature injury of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Rep. Altmire. "More than half of combat casualties in these conflicts have associated brain injuries, often due to improvised explosive devices. This bill will ensure that our veterans are properly screened for TBI and, if diagnosed, receive the appropriate treatment."

"We owe no greater debt than to our veterans," said Rep. Altmire. "Today's mark-up brings us one step closer to keeping our nation's promise to provide the finest quality health care to America's returning heroes."

H.R. 2199 also includes language to expand VA resources to provide rural communities with "mobile vet centers" for limited mental health services. Representative Altmire is a cosponsor of H.R. 2199, which passed with bipartisan support on a voice vote. It is expected to be considered on the House Floor next week.