

House Armed Services Committee

Ike Skelton, Chairman

For Immediate Release: December 6, 2007

<http://armedservices.house.gov>

Contact: Loren Dealy or Lara Battles
202-225-2539

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL IMPROVES CARE FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Washington, DC – House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-MO) announced today that the conference agreement to H.R. 1585, the Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, includes the Wounded Warrior Act, which takes major steps to address problems confronted by wounded service members and their families.

“Earlier this year, Americans were rightly outraged by reports of substandard facilities and bureaucratic roadblocks affecting service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center as well as other military medical facilities. This year’s defense authorization bill addresses these problems through the Wounded Warrior Act, which establishes new requirements to provide the people, training, and oversight mechanisms needed to restore confidence in the quality of care and service received by our wounded warriors and their families,” said Skelton.

“I urge my colleagues to support this conference report that will do so much to help those who have sacrificed so much on behalf of our nation. In the days ahead, Congress must continue its oversight to ensure that service members and their families receive the quality care that is expected by all Americans,” said Skelton.

Among its provisions to improve care for wounded warriors and their families, the conference report would:

- Create the Wounded Warrior Resource Center to serve as a single point of contact for service members, their families, and primary caregivers to report issues with facilities, obtain health care, and receive benefits information;
- Require semi-annual inspections of housing facilities for recovering service members;
- Require the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to jointly develop a comprehensive policy on the care and management of members of the armed forces, including the development of fully interoperable electronic health records;
- Mandate the establishment of new DoD-wide standards for processing disability evaluations to reduce discrepancies between the Department of Defense assessments and those conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Mandate the establishment of new DoD-wide standards for processing medical evaluations, training and qualifying those performing the evaluations, and assigning independent medical advisors to assist recovering service members and families;

- Require a comprehensive policy to address traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), other mental health conditions, and military eye injuries; and
- Require the Secretary of Defense to conduct a study of the support services provided to families of recovering service members and to contract with the National Academy of Sciences to study the physical and mental health needs of those deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

###