

June 28 2005 - Rules Committee Republicans ...

Rules Committee Republicans

Oppose Health Care for Vets

Vote against funding to fill billion dollar shortfall in Health Care for Vets

Washington, DC - Late Monday evening Rules Committee Chairman David Dreier (R-CA) along with Reps. Hastings (R-WA), Capito (R-WV), Cole (R-OK), Bishop (R-UT) and Gingrey (R-GA) voted against taking care of a budget shortfall the Bush Administration recently announced has opened up in our country's veterans' health care system.

"It just doesn't make any sense," said Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, the Ranking Democrat on the House Rules Committee. She continued, "Of all the places to pinch pennies, the health care our veterans rely on shouldn't be one of them. We have a patriotic duty to ensure our veterans are taken care of with the utmost respect."

Last week, the Bush Administration acknowledged that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) needs an additional one billion dollars this year to cover the health care needs of our country's veterans, including approximately 86,000 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Every major veteran's groups, including the American Legion, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Disabled American Veterans, condemned this billion-dollar shortfall and predicted it could seriously harm the quality and availability of veterans' health care.

In response to the announced shortfall, Texas Congressman Chet Edwards, the top Democratic Member on the House Subcommittee on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs, offered an amendment to immediately address this shortfall, so no veteran would lose access to their much needed health care. Invoking a special budget wartime authority, Edwards proposed adding the money to H.R. 3057, the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill that Congress will be passing later this week.

Unfortunately, Chairman Dreier (R-CA) & Reps. Hastings (R-WA), Capito (R-WV), Cole (R-OK), Bishop (R-UT) and Gingrey (R-GA) opposed giving Congressman Edwards the procedural waiver his amendment needed to be debated and quickly passed this week. In the Rules Committee Monday night, Republican members voted along party lines to block the Edwards Amendment and prevent the House from having the opportunity to consider it.

"Standing up for our veterans is not a Democratic or a Republican issue, its an American issue," said Rep. Slaughter. She concluded, "It's about keeping the solemn promise we make to the men and women who go to war to defend our freedoms. We promise we'll take care of them if they come home wounded...It is unconscionable to me that we would ever go back on that promise while our country is at war."