

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

NEW YORK
SENATOR

RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
SUITE 476
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3204
202-224-4451

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3204

June 12, 2007

Mr. Dale Dowling
44 Fawn Street
Rochester, New York 14622

Dear Mr. Dowling:

Thank you for contacting me to share your concerns regarding veterans' issues. With courageous American troops in harm's way in Afghanistan, Iraq and other parts of the world, we are all reminded of the extraordinary sacrifices that our nation's veterans have made in defense of democracy and freedom. We have a duty to honor those who have served our nation, and as senator and a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I continue to work on ways to support veterans and their families.

I believe there is no more important way of honoring our veterans than to ensure they receive quality health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). I was proud to accept the "Unsung Hero of the 108th Congress" award from The American Legion for helping lead the way in securing a record increase in funding for veterans' health care for fiscal year 2004. I continue working on a variety of ways to maintain and enhance veterans' health care – fighting to keep New York VA hospitals open, to provide more funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and to help guarantee VA health care funding.

In March 2006, for instance, I voted in support of legislation which would have ensured funding of veterans' health care by taking into account the fluctuating number of veterans and inflation. Additionally, I co-sponsored the *Fulfilling Our Duty to America's Veterans Act of 2005*, to provide for guaranteed VA health care funding and expanded health care, mental health, transition, and disability benefits for veterans.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in increasing numbers of service members returning with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In October 2006, as part of the 2007 *National Defense Authorization Act*, the President signed into law major pieces of my Heroes at Home legislation, which requires the establishment of a training curricula to guide Department of Defense (DoD) and VA health professionals as they help family members learn to support loved ones suffering from TBI. Heroes at Home also requires the establishment of a working group to identify ways to help Guardsmen and Reservists transition back to civilian jobs after deployment in Iraq or Afghanistan, and sets up a DoD Task Force to assess the mental health challenges – including PTSD – faced by members of the Guard and Reserve. In September 2006, moreover, I secured \$3 million in initial funding for Heroes at Home in the annual Department of Defense Appropriations bill.

I also recently cosponsored the *Healing the Invisible Wounds Act of 2006* with Senator Akaka and other colleagues. The legislation would protect PTSD compensation, enhance counseling and readjustment services available to National Guard and Reserve members returning from a combat theater, and authorize additional funding for Veterans' Centers.

Additionally, I continue to communicate with VA Secretary Nicholson, as I did with Secretary Principi, to share the views and concerns of New York's veterans, focusing most recently on the future of veterans' health care and the outcome of the VA's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) initiative. I continue to oppose enrollment fees or increased co-pays for Priority Group 7 and 8 veterans

I am also concerned with the unjust manner in which the law treats our disabled military retirees – not allowing them to receive the retirement benefits to which they are entitled. In response, I have co-sponsored the *Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2005*, a bipartisan bill that would provide fair retirement benefits to America's disabled veterans by helping fix a more-than-a-century-old law that prevents disabled veterans from receiving both retirement pay and disability pay at the same time. Building on hard-won improvements to the original law that have been enacted in recent years, the *Retired Pay Restoration Act* would immediately end the prohibition on concurrent receipt for many more disabled veterans.

To pay tribute to the sacrifices that so many men and women in uniform have made for our nation, I have worked hard to honor recipients of the Order of the Purple Heart for Military Merit. I was pleased to participate in a public ceremony on May 30, 2003, in Newburgh, New York, to celebrate the first day issue of a Postal Service stamp paying tribute to Purple Heart recipients. In 2005, I wrote to the United States Postmaster General urging support for the stamp, and in February 2006, I was honored to receive the Military Order of the Purple Heart's Inspirational Leadership Award.

I have also worked to honor our veterans who served in the Korean War or in Korea after the war. In 2001, I co-sponsored the *Korea Defense Service Medal Act*. The medal recognizes service members who participated in Korean operations after the end of the Korean War. The bill's essential provisions were included in the 2003 *National Defense Authorization Act* that has been signed in to law.

In addition to honoring Purple Heart recipients and veterans of the Korean War, I have sought to recognize the dedication and sacrifice of Cold War veterans by introducing the *Cold War Medal Act of 2005* to create a military service medal for members of the Armed Forces who served honorably during the Cold War. Our victory in that long struggle was a tremendous accomplishment, and the men and women who served during that time deserve to be recognized.

Last, but absolutely not least, it is our obligation to help support the families of veterans, particularly the families of those veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of our country. In 2003, I joined with Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison to pass legislation that benefits the spouses of our nation's fallen servicemen and women by allowing these "Gold Star" spouses who choose to remarry after age 57 to continue to receive dependency and indemnity compensation benefits. In May 2006, I was honored to be chosen by the Gold Star Wives for a

National Appreciation Award. I am also proud to have introduced the *Gold Star Parents Annuity Act*, which provides for the payment of a monthly stipend to the parents of fallen service members.

Again, thank you for writing about these important veterans' issues. For updates on issues affecting our veterans that are being discussed before the United States Senate, please visit my website at <http://clinton.senate.gov>. Please be assured that I will continue to work in support of new initiatives on behalf of the men and women who served our nation in the past and continue to do so today.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hillary Rodham Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "H" and a long, sweeping underline.

Hillary Rodham Clinton