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Attachments:

American Legion Commander Praises Obama's Change in Plan

WASHINGTON (March 18, 2009) - The leader of the nation's largest veterans organization applauded President Obama for dropping his plan to bill private insurance companies for the treatment of military veterans who have suffered service-connected disabilities and injuries.

"We are glad that President Obama listened to the strong objections raised by The American Legion and veterans everywhere about this unfair plan," said National Commander David K Rehbein of The American Legion. "We thank the administration for its proposed increase in the VA budget and we are always available to assist by providing guidance to ensure a veterans health care system that is worthy of the heroes that use it."

Following a meeting this afternoon with The American Legion and other veterans service organizations, the White House announced that it will no longer considering billing insurance companies or veterans for their service-connected disabilities.

"Although we disagreed with the proposal, additional revenue streams are needed by VA," Rehbein said. "I strongly encourage Congress and the administration to allow VA to begin billing Medicare for the treatment of Medicare-eligible nonservice-connected veterans. They paid into Medicare for their entire working careers and should be able to use it in the medical system that was built specifically for them."

With a current membership of 2.6 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and the mentoring of youth. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

- 30 -

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A high resolution photo of Nat. Cmdr. Rehbein is available at www.legion.org.