

From: March, Joseph H.
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Congressman Filner visits Legion Washington headquarters to gather "to do" list items.

WASHINGTON (July 21, 2009) - U.S. Representative Bob Filner (D-CA) says the maintenance of high quality health care for veterans is at the very top of his list of priorities. Filner, who is chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, came to The American Legion's Washington, DC headquarters today to address a gathering of the veterans service organization's top leadership.

In brief remarks, Congressman Filner thanked National Commander David K. Rehbein and the Legion for assertively promoting new legislation that will provide funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs a year in advance. Advance funding, long sought by The American Legion, will help assure timely delivery of VA services. Filner also congratulated recently appointed Washington office Executive Director Peter Gaytan on his promotion and offered a tribute to retiring Executive Director John Sommer for his three-plus decades of service to the Legion. "But basically, said the California congressman, "I am here to gather information, not impart it."

In response to queries from Legion leaders attending today's Veterans Planning and Coordinating Committee (VPCC) meeting, Filner stated he was "unsure" of the ultimate fate of hotly debated healthcare reform legislation. It changes every day," he said, "so I don't want to waste my time speculating about it." Filner listened to the oft-repeated Legion proposals to allow the VA to bill Medicare for treatment of veterans with non-service connected health issues and provide VA healthcare to military family members. Filner replied, "Now might be a very good time to re-introduce these ideas."

The congressman concluded his visit by announcing committee passage of House bill H.R. 3155: the Caregiver Assistance and Resource Enhancement Act. This legislation would provide "certain caregivers of veterans with training, support, and medical care." It is designed to assist primary caregivers of veterans requiring constant, in-home care in meeting their day-to-day challenges as well as providing a stipend for those who have had to abandon employment to provide their services to the veteran. The full text of the bill may be viewed at:

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=h111-3155>

Congressman Filner says the legislation will now be considered by the full House of Representatives.

As the congressman was leaving, National Commander Rehbein thanked him for generously taking the time to visit Legion headquarters and extracted a promise to brief Legion leaders annually in such a manner. "Hey, I'll do it quarterly," replied Congressman Filner.

Rep. Bob Filner, D-CA, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, thanked the leadership of The American Legion for aggressively promoting advance appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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