The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N.W. ★ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 ★
(202) 263-2986 ★

April 12, 2016

Honorable Mike Coffman
House of Representatives
2443 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Coffman:

On behalf of the more than 2 million members of The American Legion I express support for HR 4683, *The Fairness for Veterans Act*. This bill, as written, seeks to overhaul the military discharge review appellate process by allowing veterans who received an inappropriate discharge from military service the ability to have their discharge upgraded if there is a display of posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and/or military sexual trauma.

Since 2009 approximately 22,000 veterans suffering from mental health conditions were discharged from military service for misconduct. Veterans who receive less than honorable discharges are often disqualified from receiving health care services from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This bill would ensure combat veterans, whose condition should have been considered prior to their discharge, receive due consideration in their discharge appeals process.

Resolution 26, *Mischaracterization of Discharges for Servicemembers with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Military Sexual Trauma (*MST), passed at The American Legion's 2013 National Executive Committee Meeting. This resolution urges a study be conducted of existing Department of Defense policies and procedures for character of discharge for servicemembers that served during time of war and were susceptible or diagnosed with TBI, PTSD, MST victims, and/or other personality disorders.

In conclusion, this legislation will dramatically help veterans to receive the benefits they earned. The American Legion applauds your leadership in addressing issues that are important to America's servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

Sincerely,

DALE BARNETT
National Commander