June 17, 2011

Honorable Bernard Sanders
United States Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Sanders:

On behalf of the 2.4 million members of The American Legion, I would like to express full support for S. 1017, the *Disabled Veteran Caregiver Housing Assistance Act of 2011*, which would *inter alia* increase assistance for the Temporary Residence Allowance (TRA) Grant program for disabled veterans who are temporarily residing in housing owned by a family member, and expand eligibility for Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grants for veterans with vision impairment from blindness in both eyes, having only light perception, to those having central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the use of a standard correcting lens.

Military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan are surviving wounds in numbers far greater than previous wars. Characteristic injuries include: TBI, blindness, spinal cord injuries, burns, and damage to the limbs resulting in amputation. Many are sustaining more than one of these wounds and may require constant care from a family caregiver for years after they leave service. During this time, they frequently reside in a home that is not their own. Adaptations must often be made to their permanent home and that of their caregiver while they are recovering from their injuries. While VA does provide grants for adaptive housing, the benefit is largely based on the assumption that wounded warriors are living in their permanent home. Current law does allow VA to issue a separate grant to adapt the temporary homes of recovering veterans; however, it is set to expire at the end of this year and is little used. By extending this program permanently and decoupling the TRA Grant from the SAH Grant so the grant amount would not count against the overall grant for permanent housing, Congress can show their strong support for those veterans who have made extreme sacrifices for our freedom. The other upgrades in the bill would also constitute a necessary recognition by Congress of the evolving needs of these wounded warriors.

The American Legion fully supports enacting the *Disabled Veteran Caregiver Housing Assistance Act of 2011* and appreciates your leadership in addressing this critical issue facing both serving members of the Armed Forces as well as our nation's veterans.

Respectfully,

Tim Tetz, Director
National Legislative Commission