Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 25, 2006

Honorable George W. Bush
The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As your administration continues to formulate its FY 2008 budget submission, we write to request that you provide the necessary funding for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) health care system and related benefits programs. Unfortunately, we believe it is necessary to express our serious concern in this matter due to your administration's record of under-funding the VA by at least $9 billion over the last 6 years. We are particularly concerned about veterans funding next year and in the future as your budget submission this year reduced veterans' funding by $10 billion over the next 5 years.

Providing for our military veterans and their families is a continuing cost of war and should be an important component of our national defense policy. Indeed, President George Washington recognized this point, saying, "[t]he willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation." Mr. President, the time is right for your administration to change course and fully fund the VA, cease efforts to shift the costs of health care onto the backs of veterans, and finally recognize and implement the concept of 'shared sacrifice' with respect to the federal budget.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan along with the aging of our World War II, Korea and Vietnam War veterans have increased demand for VA services. However, year after year you request inadequate funding for veterans' health care. Each year your budget submission includes proposals to increase veterans' co-payments and fees, essentially taxing certain veterans for their health care. Each year your VA budget fails to request what is needed and relies on accounting gimmicks such as "management efficiencies" and inaccurate health care projections. Such efforts are transparent as the true consequences of your administration's budget flaws are being realized by current and future veterans. Indeed, recently VA officials themselves acknowledged that greater funding was needed to care for our servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffering from mental health disorders and traumatic brain injuries.

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Mr. President, during your tenure, health care waiting lines have increased, appointments and medical procedures delayed, more than 250,000 veterans have been turned away from entering the VA health care system, and disability and education claims backlogs have grown to unreasonable rates. Moreover, Congress has been forced to add billions of dollars in supplemental VA funding due to embarrassing funding shortfalls.

What we request of you and your administration is simple – provide funding in your FY 2008 budget submission to ensure that our servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and the heroes from our previous conflicts receive the care and benefits they have earned and deserve.

Without question, Mr. President, the federal budget is a reflection of national policies and ultimately a reflection of our moral priorities. Please join us in working to provide the necessary resources in the fiscal year 2008 budget to fully fund the VA and to take care of our veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pelosi

Lane Evans

Tony Hoyer

James E Clyburn

John B Larson

Ike Skelton

Jim P Moran

John Spratt

Stet R

Darlene Hooley

Maurice Hinchey

Sanford Bishop Jr.

Bob Filner

Jim Cooper

Tim Holden

Tom Lantos

Jane Harman

Jean Schmidt

Louise M Slaughter

Jim V. Gutierrez

Marcy Kaptur

Jim Oberstar

Alice L. Hastings

Wm. Jefferson

Hilda L Solis

Dennis Ku

Danny K. Davis

Bobby L. Rush

Bennie M. Thompson

Bob Cramer

Steven M. Rothman

Jerry V. Costello

José E. Serrano

George Miller

Eric Jaleomaraga

Al Green

Paul Rachmanov

Ed Pastor

Bart Stupak

Gene Green

Hydia M. Velazquez

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Lucille Roybal-Allard

Michael H Michael

Dave Scott

Brian Higgins

Mike Doyle

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Stephen F. Lynch

Stephanie Fonseca

Ted Strickland

John Lewis

Hoyt Dogget

Robert Wexler

Tim Ryan

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Wm Lacy Clay

Lois Capps

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Marion Berry

Nick Rahall

Bart Gordon

Chaka Fattah

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Peter J. Visclosky

Barney Frank

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Jim Moran

Ben Sutherland

Howard L. Berman

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Donald M. Payne

Eleanor H. Norton

David Price

Gene Taylor

Elijah E. Cummings

Eric L. Engel

Ben Cardin

Carolyn B. Kilpatrick

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Collin C. Peterson

Rick Boucher

Melvin L. Watt

Paul Gillmor

Jim McDermott

Kendrick B. Meek

Betty McCollum

David Wu

Rush Holt

Stephanie Tubbs Jones

Barbara Lee

Ben Chandler

Dennis J. Kucinich

Michael E. Capuano

Jim Cooper

Diana DeGette

Julia Carson

James M. Clinton

John T. Salazar

Earl Pomeroy

Ron Kind

Sam Moore

Chris Van Hollen

Raúl M. Grijalva

Rahm Emanuel

Vic Snyder

Allen Boyd

Sam Farr

Daniel Lipinski

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Jim Matheson

Loretta Sanchez

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Russ Carnahan

Linda T. Sánchez

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Jim Mitchell

Melissa L Bean

Mike Ross

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Charles A. [illegible]

Joe Baca

Pete Stark

John Barrow

Artur Davis

Ed Case

Zoe Lofgren

Grace F. Napolitano

Neil Abercrombie

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Bob Filner

Tom Cole

Leonard L. Boswell

Susan A. Davis

Norm Dicks

Solomon P. Ortiz

Ruben Hinojosa

Bill Pascrell Jr

Bill Delahunt

Earl Blumenauer

Corrine Brown

Rush E Atc

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Sheila Jackson Lee

Carolyn McCarthy

Jim Langevin

Rick Larsen

John F. Tierney

Diane E. Watson

Mike Thompson

Shelley Berkley

Jim McGovern

Madeleine Z. Bordallo

Anthony D. Weiner

Frank Pallone Jr.

G.K. Butterfield Jr.

Jim Cain

Patrick J. Kennedy

Steve Israel

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Henry Cuellar

Charlie Melancon

Brad Sherman

Elliot R. Engel

Brad Schiff

Sam Farr

Mark Udall