

Altmire's Bill to Create TBI Programs for Veterans

May 23, 2007

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Mr. Speaker, our brave service men and women are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with TBI at an alarming rate. Sixty-five percent of the soldiers at Walter Reed today have been diagnosed with traumatic injury, and thousands of veterans have mild TBI, but have not been diagnosed. And I'm concerned that the VA has not been properly diagnosing and treating those veterans with traumatic brain injury.

As has been mentioned today, traumatic brain injury is the signature injury for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is why I introduced the Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Act, which has been included in its entirety in this legislation we're debating today. My bill would improve the diagnosis and treatment of TBI for our Nation's veterans by requiring the VA to screen veterans for symptoms, develop and operate a comprehensive program of long-term care for postacute TBI rehabilitation, establish TBI transition offices at all polytrauma network sites, and create and maintain a TBI health registry.

In addition to improving the diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injury, this bill will improve the VA's research of TBI and ensure that the VA provides better care to veterans in rural communities.

I want to thank the subcommittee chairman, Mr. Michaud, and the full committee chair, Mr. Filner, for their leadership on this issue, for including my legislation in its entirety in this bill, and I want to urge my colleagues to support this piece of legislation.