

Rep. Markey announces victory for veterans and health care

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Congresswoman Betsy Markey hailed a Monday, July 12 announcement by Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Eric Shinseki that the VA will adopt an easier process for Veterans seeking health care and disability compensation for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The VA's new rule grants a presumption of service connection to any Veteran who served in a combat zone and has been diagnosed with PTSD.

"Today's news is long overdue for Veterans and their families who have experienced PTSD," said Rep. Markey. "It is our duty to care for all who have answered the call to defend our nation, including those with wounds we aren't able to see."

Currently, less than half of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans diagnosed with PTSD are receiving benefits from the VA, but the rule change will also have a dramatic impact on many of our Vietnam-era Veterans, who are often diagnosed many years after their traumatic incident making service connection very difficult to establish.

"The men and women who have risked their lives in defense of our liberties deserve nothing less than the best care when they return home," said Rep. Markey. "This critical improvement to VA policy will ensure that Veterans of all generations receive the care they deserve."

Before this change in VA regulations, Veterans who applied for disability benefits to compensate for PTSD had to demonstrate to the VA that their illness was service related, essentially denying benefits to thousands of veterans unable to document their claims after their discharge from service. The new rule will make it easier for all Veterans suffering from PTSD to receive VA health care and disability compensation, and many Vietnam Veterans who were denied PTSD benefits in the past may now be eligible.

Rep. Markey has been a leader on Veterans' care issues, introducing legislation like the HONOR Act (H.R. 3368), which will improve treatment for our service members and veterans suffering from 'invisible injuries' like PTSD, and successfully passing a measure to create a scholarship program for Veterans to work toward advanced degrees in behavioral health.