



## THE MILITARY COALITION

201 North Washington Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314  
(703) 838-8143

March 18, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of uniformed services and veterans associations representing more than 5.5 million current and former servicemembers and their families and survivors writes to express our very deep concern over an initiative we understand is being considered that would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to bill a veteran's private or employer-based insurance for care delivered in the VA for service-connected disabilities.

The Military Coalition is very grateful that your administration is requesting \$52.5 billion for the VA's discretionary accounts, a 10.3% increase over FY2009 enacted levels. Discounting estimated collections, your budget proposal marks the first time in the history of the Veterans Independent Budget (IB) that an administration is proposing a budget that exceeds the IB's recommendation. This level of funding will help to assure quality care delivery and access for our nation's veterans, including the enrollment of increasing numbers of 'Priority Group 8' veterans in the coming years.

But the Coalition is very troubled and disappointed that your administration is also actively considering allowing the VA to bill a veteran's private or employment-based insurance for the care and treatment of a disability or injury that was determined to have been incurred in or the result of honorable military service to our country.

The Military Coalition strongly recommends that you cancel any consideration of the concept of third-party billing for service-connected care in VA facilities. This idea is unacceptable and an abrogation of our government's moral and legal responsibility to the men and women who have sacrificed so much for our freedoms.

The mission of the VA is "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." The VA emphasizes that it "provide[s] veterans the world-class benefits and services they have earned . . . by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship." Unfortunately, any proposal to bill veterans for the care of their service-connected disabilities would ignore the most important aspect of this vision—that their care has been earned.

TMC understands and accepts that the VA bills third-party insurers of veterans who are treated for non-service connected conditions. However, we cannot and would not agree to any proposal that would expand this concept further. There is simply no justification for billing a veteran's personal insurance for care that the VA has a responsibility to provide. While we understand the fiscal difficulties our country faces right now, placing the burden of those fiscal problems on the men and women who have already sacrificed a great deal for this country is unconscionable.

We strongly urge your administration to drop consideration of any proposal to bill third-party insurers for veterans' service-connected conditions. The Military Coalition is grateful for the significant increase in funding for the VA and we look forward to working with your administration to honor and serve all those who have worn the uniform of our nation.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition  
(signatures enclosed)

Michael M. Dean  
Air Force Association

Richard M. Dean  
Air Force Sergeants Association

Patricia M. Thompson  
Air Force Women Officers  
Associated

Edward P. Pizar  
American Logistics Association

James K. [unclear]  
Army Aviation Assn. of America

George K. [unclear]  
Assn. of Military Surgeons  
of the United States

William B. Lopez  
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Sam [unclear]  
Commissioned Officers Assn. of  
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Edward B. Swift  
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John [unclear]  
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[unclear]  
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Peter W. [unclear]  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Michael [unclear]  
Marine Corps League

Kevin [unclear]  
Marine Corps Reserve Association

Walter Ryan  
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Military Order of the Purple Heart

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The Retired Enlisted Assn.

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Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US