

### *Letter from Congress Signed by Rep. Luján Spurs Action, Supports Veterans*

Washington, DC – Rep. Ben Ray Luján applauds the White House’s decision to end a proposal to require veterans to use their private health insurance plans to pay for care and treatment of service-related injuries. Yesterday, Rep. Luján and 67 of his colleagues in the House of Representatives raised questions about the proposal in a letter to President Barack Obama and urged him to reconsider the proposal. The effort to send the letter was led by Rep. Glenn Nye of Virginia. The White House announced that it would not move forward with the controversial proposal yesterday, following a meeting between the White House and leaders of the national veterans’ service organizations.

“America’s soldiers and their families sacrifice for our country every day,” said Rep. Luján. “We have a responsibility to provide them with the benefits they have earned and deserve, especially when they are injured in combat. President Obama has built a budget that supports veterans by increasing funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs and expanding employment opportunities for veterans. By removing the proposal to bill veterans’ private health insurers for service-related injuries, he has signaled a firm commitment to the brave men and women who have served our nation.”

[VIEW SIGNED VERSION OF THE LETTER](#)

[VIEW REP. LUJAN’S PRESS RELEASE FROM YESTERDAY REGARDING THE LETTER](#)

**FULL TEXT OF LETTER BELOW:**

March 18, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama

President of the United States

The White House

Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

We first want to take this opportunity to thank you for the clear commitment your administration's budget outline makes to our nation's veterans. The proposed 10 percent increase in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for next fiscal year is truly historic. We believe the 2010 budget will ensure the VA never again faces the chronic under-funding that prevented countless veterans from receiving the health benefits they have earned.

While we strongly support your plans to increase funding for the VA by \$25 billion over the next five years, it is with equal conviction that we oppose the proposal to bill veterans' private health insurance plans for care and treatment of service-connected injuries or disabilities.

We do not give our veterans health care – they earn it – and it would be unacceptable for the VA to ask our veterans to pay for the treatment of injuries received while serving our nation in uniform. That responsibility belongs to the VA, and it would be wrong to outsource the responsibility of covering the care of those veterans to private insurance companies.

Additionally, this proposal could harm our veterans and their families in unintended, yet very serious ways, jeopardizing their families' health care and even negatively affecting veterans' employment opportunities. Billing a veteran's private health insurance for the treatment of service-connected injuries could lead to increased health care premiums, and could potentially discourage employers from hiring veterans.

We know you are committed to expanding employment opportunities for veterans. Already this year, your administration and Congress have worked to create countless jobs for veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but this proposal would undermine our efforts.

We urge you to take this proposal off the table, and let us instead focus on ensuring that our veterans receive the full care and benefits they have earned. The moral obligation our nation has to our veterans demands nothing less. We are happy to discuss these issues with you further as we move toward a final budget for the VA.

We would like to thank you again for your commitment to improving care for the men and women who have borne the battle, and who have sacrificed their health and well-being in serving their country. Thank you for your service to our nation.

Sincerely,