

COMMITTEES:

ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEES:  
READINESS

SEAPOWER AND EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

EDUCATION AND LABOR

SUBCOMMITTEES:  
HIGHER EDUCATION

HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, LABOR, AND PENSION



Joe Courtney

Congress of the United States

2nd District, Connecticut

January 14, 2008

WASHINGTON OFFICE:

215 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
P (202) 225-2076  
F (202) 225-4977

DISTRICT OFFICE:

2 COURTHOUSE SQUARE, 5TH FLOOR  
NORWICH, CT 06360  
P (860) 886-0139  
F (860) 886-2974

77 HAZARD AVENUE, UNIT J

ENFIELD, CT 06082  
P (860) 741-6011  
F (860) 741-6036

The Honorable James B. Peake  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 New Hampshire Avenue  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Peake:

I am encouraged by press reports that the President intends to release the additional \$3.7 billion provided by Congress for veterans care as part of the Fiscal Year 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act (PL 110-161).

As you know, the additional veterans funding provided by Congress includes \$125 million to increase the mileage reimbursement rate for disabled veterans who must travel to VA medical facilities from the current 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile. The reimbursement rate has not been increased since 1977, even while the reimbursement rate for federal employees has increased steadily over the years. This additional funding will allow VA to increase the mileage reimbursement without impacting funding for other critical health care programs, which has been the VA's primary objection to providing any increase in the mileage reimbursement in the past.

This is an especially critical issue for disabled veterans in eastern Connecticut, where many have to travel for an hour or more to attend appointments at the Newington or West Haven VA medical centers. Even as the price of gas has increased dramatically over the past 30 years, veterans in eastern Connecticut have had to struggle with both stagnant reimbursement rates and a deductible that reduces the value of the already low reimbursement they currently receive.

To this end, I strongly urge to you quickly implement the increased mileage reimbursement rate for 2008 upon the President's release of the additional \$3.7 billion provided by Congress for veterans care and services. Any delay in implementing this increase will only continue to make it difficult for veterans in eastern Connecticut to access the care and benefits they have earned. This long overdue increase will make it easier for disabled veterans in eastern Connecticut, and across the country, to access the care and benefits they have earned for their service to our nation and I hope you will implement it without delay.

Thank you for your attention to this request and for your continued dedication to those who have served our nation.

Sincerely,

JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress