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## U.S. House of Representatives

### COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

335 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

October 18, 2006

The Honorable R. James Nicholson  
Secretary  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Readjustment Counseling Service provides a unique role in reaching out to veterans and helping them successfully readjust from the battlefield to the home front. The Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Centers staff are dedicated and deeply committed to meeting the needs of veterans and their families. However, without additional resources to meet increased workload, even dedicated staff have limits in their capacity to meet expanding needs.

The VA's own data show that in a nine-month period, from October 2005 through June 2006, the number of veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan seeking services for readjustment counseling concerns at Vet Centers more than tripled. In addition, the number of returning veterans with PTSD seeking services at Vet Centers, and not VA medical facilities, more than doubled.

At my request, Democratic staff of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs prepared a report to review the capacity of Vet Centers to meet the needs of returning combat veterans and veterans from previous conflicts. The report finds that Vet Centers have seen a significant increase in outreach and readjustment counseling services to returning veterans. The report also finds that without an increase in counseling staff, this increase has affected veterans' access to quality care.

Please find enclosed the report entitled *Review of Capacity of Department of Veterans Affairs Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Centers*. I am providing this draft for your review and comment. I would appreciate your written comments by November 22, 2006.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL H. MICHAUD  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Subcommittee on Health

Enclosure