

Congressional Brain Injury Task Force

NEWSLETTER

110th Congress
December 22, 2008

The **Congressional Brain Injury Task Force Newsletter** aims to educate and promote the awareness of brain injury, one of the driving missions of the Task Force. Below you will find recent legislative activity, studies and reports, media coverage, and upcoming events related to traumatic brain injury (TBI). We believe that knowledge and information can inspire the change needed to improve the lives of individuals suffering from TBI.

Approximately 1.4 million Americans experience traumatic brain injury (TBI) each year, and an estimated 3.2 million Americans are living with long-term, severe disabilities as a result of brain injury. TBI is the leading cause of death and disability among young Americans in the United States and has been named the signature wound of the War in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We hope that you and your staff find this newsletter informative. Please contact Mandy Spears (mandy.spears@mail.house.gov; 5-5751) in Rep. Pascrell's office or Becky Wolfkiel (rebeccah.wolfkiel@mail.house.gov; 5-5836) in Rep. Platts' office if you have questions about any of the information included in the newsletter, would like more information about the Task Force, or would like to join.

Sincerely,

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Co-Chair

Todd Russell Platts
Co-Chair

Note: Membership to the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force is open only to Members of Congress.

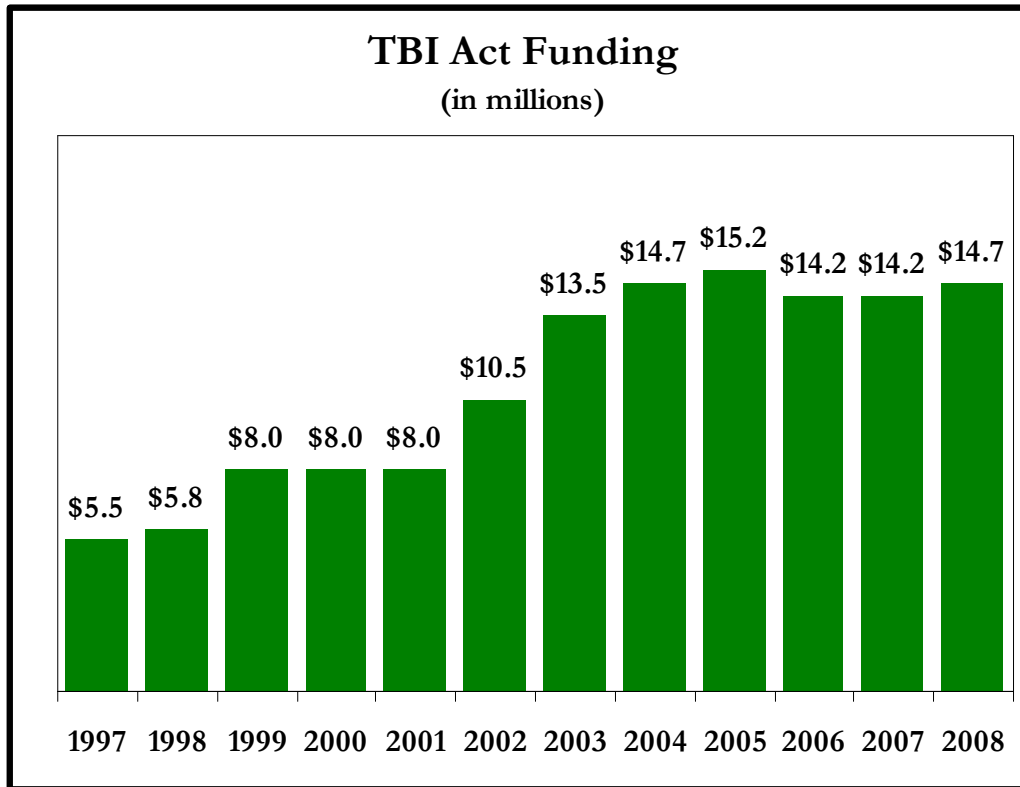
CONTENTS

[Recent Legislative Activity](#)

[Recent Studies and Reports](#)

[Recent Media Coverage](#)

RECENT LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY



FY 2009 Appropriations

Department of Defense - Defense Appropriations were passed as part of the [2009 Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act](#), which was signed into law on September 30, 2008. The bill provided \$300 million for TBI and psychological health research and treatment.

Department of Veterans Affairs - On August 1, 2008, the House of Representatives approved its version of the FY 2009 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs spending bill, which contained [report language](#) encouraging continued partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) in treating soldiers with TBIs; revision of ICD-9 codes for traumatic brain injuries; the development of universal practice guidelines for TBIs, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and blast injuries; access to TBI and PTSD services through joint clinics; and projects to promote seamless transitions for individuals transitioning from DoD to the VA.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the FY 2009 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs spending bill, containing increased funding for medical research, including TBI research. The bill allocates \$526.8 million for medical research targeted to the veteran population, including research into mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, polytraumatic physical activities and sensory abilities, such as hearing and vision loss. The bill also contains [report language](#) directing the

VA to establish and expand cooperative agreements with public and private groups to treat traumatic brain injury patients from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and to report on expanding the pool for expertise available to treat the injuries.

Veterans Appropriations were passed as part of the [2009 Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act](#), which was signed into law on September 30, 2008.

Department of Health and Human Services - On March 19, 2008, members of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force called on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education to provide \$30 million for programs authorized under the Traumatic Brain Injury Act, including \$9 million for CDC TBI Registries, Surveillance, and Education; \$15 million for HRSA TBI State Grants; and \$6 million for HRSA TBI Protection and Advocacy Grants. *Status:* The programs were level-funded at the FY 2008 through March 2009 as part of the [2009 Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act](#), which was signed into law on September 30, 2008. Advocates have called on Congress to provide the highest possible funding amounts contained in the House and Senate Subcommittee-passed bills for TBI programs are included in the final FY 2009 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill or funding package. Specifically, these highest funding levels are as follows:

- \$11 million for the HRSA Federal TBI Program
- \$6.565 million for CDC TBI Programs
- \$107.741 million for NIDRR Programs, including TBI Model Systems of Care

TBI Awareness ([H.Con.Res. 91](#))

This resolution expresses the need for enhanced public awareness of TBI and support for the designation of a National Brain Injury Awareness Month. It currently has 59 co-sponsors and will be reintroduced in the next Congress.

The ConTACT Act ([H.R. 7274](#))

On November 19, 2008, Task Force Co-Chairs Bill Pascrell, Jr. and Todd Russell Platts introduced the Concussion Treatment and Care Tools (ConTACT) Act, which provides States with the tools needed to adopt and disseminate concussion management guidelines for school-sponsored sports and to fund schools' implementation of computerized pre-season baseline and post-injury neuropsychological testing for student athletes.

RECENT STUDIES AND REPORTS

□ **Veterans will need support systems at home and in their communities to assist them in coping with the long-term sequelae of their injuries.** □

–The Institute of Medicine, “Long-Term Consequences of Traumatic Brain Injury”

The Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation: [Prevalence of Long-Term Disability from Traumatic Brain Injury in the Civilian Population of the United States, 2005](#), Nov/Dec 2008

Findings: An estimated 1.1% of the U.S. civilian population—or 3.17 million people—were living with a long-term disability from TBI at the beginning of 2005.

The Institute of Medicine: [Gulf War and Health: Long-Term Consequences of Traumatic Brain Injury](#), December 2008

Findings: Many of the thousands of troops who suffered traumatic brain injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan are at risk of long-term health problems including depression, Alzheimer's-like symptoms, seizures, and problems with social functioning. The report recommends that all soldiers exposed to a blast be screened for TBI and that the VA fund rigorous studies and a registry of TBI patients.

The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators: [Summary of State Legislation on Returning Troops and Veterans](#), October 2008

Findings: Increasingly, state legislatures and governors are providing state leadership in providing outreach, information, and resources to returning troops, veterans, and their families with regard to TBI, PTSD, and related issues.

RECENT MEDIA COVERAGE

Recent studies at the University of Pittsburgh and the McGill University Neurological Institute have linked cumulative concussions to the deterioration of brain function and to mental diseases.

-Christina Pappas, "Concussion Studies Butt Heads with Assumptions"

[Gray Area](#), *New Jersey Monthly*, October 14, 2008

[A Wound Obscure, Yet Serious: Consequence of Unidentified Traumatic Brain Injury Are Often Severe](#), *The Dana Foundation*, October 23, 2008

[Concussion Studies Butt Heads with Assumptions](#), *Tufts Daily*, October 27, 2008

[Head Injury in Young Kids May Predict ADHD Diagnosis](#), *Washington Post*, November 6, 2008.

[Veterans' Families Seek Aid for Caregiver Role](#), *New York Times*, November 12, 2008

[Editorial: A Head Slapping Idea](#), *Boston Globe*, November 12, 2008

[Doctors Can Now Detect Mild Traumatic Brain Injuries Easier](#), *USA Today*, November 17, 2008

[In Treating Trauma, Military Branches Out](#), *National Journal*, November 22, 2008

[Proposal Targets Head Trauma in Student Athletes](#), *Montclair Times*, November 26, 2008

[Panel Urges More Screening of Brain Injury in Troops](#), *New York Times*, December 5, 2008

[Brain-Injured Troops Face Unclear Long-Term Risks](#), *USA Today*, December 5, 2008

[Brain-Injured Troops Face Unclear Long-Term Risks](#), *Washington Post*, December 5, 2008

[NFL Meeting Irks Wives of Ill Retirees](#), *New York Times*, December 13, 2008

[A New Source for People Coping with Brain Injury](#), *Washington Post*, December 16, 2008