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Barrow Reintroduces his “Disabled Veterans Fairness Act” for the 110th Congress

Bipartisan legislation would help bring outdated mileage reimbursement rates for disabled veterans up to speed with the current rate for federal employees; stop the shortchanging of America’s disabled vets

Washington, DC – Renewing his fight to bring benefits for disabled veterans in line with the times, 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) this week reintroduced his “Disabled Veterans Fairness Act” – a bipartisan bill to mandate equality and fairness in the mileage reimbursement rates that America’s disabled veterans currently receive.

“When it comes to the treatment of America’s wounded and disabled veterans, the problems at some of our VA hospitals is only part of the story,” Barrow said. “For too long now, disabled veterans who are forced to travel long distance for their care – the care they were promised – have been shortchanged by Uncle Sam.”

Since most VA clinics in Georgia provide only primary care and mental health services, many of the state’s disabled veterans are forced to travel hundreds of miles to either Atlanta or Augusta to receive specialty treatments for injury-related care. Under federal law, eligible disabled veterans who travel for this care are entitled to have their mileage reimbursed. Currently, those veterans are reimbursed at only \$0.11 per mile – less than one fourth of the \$0.48 per mile reimbursement that federal employees presently receive for their travel.

The mileage reimbursement rate for federal employees is adjusted for inflation and also fluctuates as the price of gas increases. That rate was just increased by 4¢ on [January 22](#) of this year. However, last time the veteran’s reimbursement rate was adjusted was in 1977, and it hasn’t been increased since then.

Barrow’s *Disabled Veterans Fairness Act* (H.R. 1472) would bring the outdated mileage reimbursement rate up to speed with the current requirements for federal employees. In addition, the bill would:

- Ensure that eligible disabled veterans continue to receive the current General Services Administration (GSA) rate, equal to the reimbursement rate that federal employees receive when driving privately-owned vehicles.
- Eliminate the \$6 round trip deductible that eligible disabled veterans are forced to pay when requesting mileage reimbursement.
- Mandate that the money for this program come from new and separate federal funds, so it's not competing with other necessary VA programs.

In the 109th Congress, the “Disabled Veterans Fairness Act” received bipartisan support from 85 members of the House, but was never granted a hearing in the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

“When an American soldier is wounded or permanently disabled, our country makes a promise that we’ll provide them with quality, affordable medical treatment,” Barrow said. “While previous Congresses have failed to live up to that promise, I’m hopeful that this Congress will work together to do the right thing.”

In 2005, Barrow’s efforts to update the mileage reimbursement program received the endorsement of six major national veterans associations: *The Disabled American Veterans*, *the Paralyzed Veterans of America*, *the American Legion*, *AMVETS (American Veterans)*, *the Military Order of the Purple Heart*, and *the Vietnam Veterans of America*.

In their letters to Congressman Barrow, *the Disabled American Veterans* said that the bill “would rectify an historic inequality in this program that affects sick and disabled veterans,” while *the Paralyzed Veterans of America* wrote that “this legislation will truly help our most seriously disabled veterans.”

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