



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **OHIO VETERANS UNITED STANDS WITH THE VFW AND URGES 'NO' VOTE ON H.R. 4872**

CINCINNATI, March 21, 2010 — Ohio Veterans United (OVU) joins the VFW in urging Congress not to pass the healthcare bill before Congress. "We believe that the healthcare bill is greatly flawed and does not protect the health programs provided to veterans, servicemembers or their families," says Harry Prestanski, executive director of OVU.

According to Thomas J. Tradewell Sr., national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), "The president and the Democratic leadership are betraying America's veterans." Tradewell is a combat-wounded Vietnam veteran from Sussex, Wis., who leads the 2.1 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries.

At issue is H.R. 4872 does not fully protect the healthcare programs provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the military's Tricare system. Specifically, the bill covers Tricare For Life but not the other Tricare programs that serve millions of beneficiaries; it does not cover children suffering from spina bifida as a result of a parent's exposure to Agent Orange; and it does not cover dependents, widows and orphans who are served by CHAMPVA, the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"The president was very clear at our VFW national convention last year when he said he was going to protect these programs," said Tradewell, "as did the Democratic leadership in the House and Senate repeatedly throughout the year. Now we have this flawed package that everyone is trying to rush through that blatantly omits any protections of the healthcare programs our nation provides to millions of veterans, military personnel, military retirees, and their families or survivors."

The issue surfaced publicly Friday when House Armed Service Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-Mo.) introduced legislation to explicitly protect Tricare and other Defense Department nonappropriated fund health plans from any health reforms currently under consideration by Congress.

Yesterday, Reps. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) and Buck McKeon (R-Calif.) tried to introduce an amendment to H.R. 4872 to protect the integrity and independence of the VA and Defense Department healthcare systems. Buyer is the ranking member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and McKeon is the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee.

"We urge all veterans and their families to tell Congress that this healthcare bill is flawed and will hurt the men and women and their families who have served their country," said Prestanski.

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