

3/19/2009 Veterans Should Not Pay the Bill

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March 19, 2009

Mr. Speaker, I oppose a policy proposal by the Obama administration that would break with our country's obligation to its veterans. As we know, our veterans have sacrificed to protect our way of life and deserve the promises that we made to them being kept.

Yesterday, I joined my fellow Republican members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and House Republican leaders in sending communications to President Obama in strong opposition to an ill-conceived plan. The administration's plan would bill veterans' private insurance for care related to service-connected injuries. It would permit the Department of Veterans Affairs, the VA, to ignore its core responsibility "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan." Our country has a binding obligation to provide this care, particularly to those who have become disabled as a result of their service.

It is wrong to shift this responsibility to private insurers--which actually the veterans will pay for in premiums--and to our disabled veterans themselves. Additionally, billing veterans' private insurance could result in higher premiums for the veterans to cover the cost of treating the service-connected injuries. Some disabled veterans may expend their insurance benefits on treatment of service-connected conditions, leaving no benefits for their family. This policy may also discourage employers from hiring disabled veterans.

I encourage, in the strongest possible terms, the administration to shelve this proposal permanently. While we must look for ways to save taxpayer dollars and tackle our runaway budget deficit, we should not ask those who have already

sacrificed so much to pay the bill.

We must never forget that our country has a responsibility to its veterans. Congress should honor this obligation by providing the funding necessary for the VA to maintain health care services to our men and women who have served us in uniform.