

2/06/2008 Moran Continues Work to Ensure Mental Health Services Available to Veterans

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Visits Leavenworth Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center

LEAVENWORTH - Congressman Jerry Moran today continued his efforts to ensure veterans have access to mental health care services in a visit to the Dwight D. Eisenhower Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Leavenworth. With a number of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, Moran has focused on the need for mental health programs and counseling services to treat illnesses like post traumatic stress disorder.

"Multiple deployments have taken a toll on our service members and their families," Moran said. "I have learned the VA, like many communities across Kansas, is challenged by a shortage of mental health professionals. Now that Congress and the President have come together and provided additional resources, the VA is in a better position to care for the mental health needs of our service members returning from war and for our veterans. I want to make sure the funds are used accordingly and that the VA is doing what it is supposed to in regard to mental health programs."

In previous months, Moran has visited the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center in Wichita, the Colmery-O'Neil VA Medical Center in Topeka and Fort Riley's Irwin Army Community Hospital to learn about mental health services provided to injured soldiers and veterans. Moran has been a strong proponent of establishing Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) in Kansas to bring VA care closer to veterans. He helped locate a new CBOC in Hutchinson, which will provide mental health services to area veterans. He also helped secure a new Vet Center near Fort Riley where counselors and outreach specialists provide services at no cost to combat veterans, their families and the families of soldiers who die on active duty.

Moran worked to pass legislation that gives veterans access to a full range of qualified mental health providers, including Licensed Professional Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists. For these efforts, he received the Kansas Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's 2007 Distinguished Service Award, the American Mental Health

Counselors Association President's Award and the American Counseling Association's 2006 Federal Legislative Service Award.

Moran is a senior member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee where he serves on the Subcommittee on Health.

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