

Back from the Battlefield: Are We Providing Proper Care to America's Wounded Warriors?

I am pleased that we have this opportunity to talk about what the Government is doing to care for those who have served. It is a subject that deserves our most serious attention.

I also want to say that it was a pleasure to work with Chairman Craig in developing this hearing. As Ranking Member, I appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the Chair on the topic at hand and on the witnesses we will hear from today.

VA and DoD seem to be doing a good deal to ensure a seamless transition for the men and women who serve. I applaud that, and I'm sure we will hear much more about that this morning. My focus is simple: To make sure that both Departments are doing everything possible to guarantee that each and every soldier -- whether active duty or Reserve or Guard member -- is receiving high quality care without having to work to get it.

All servicemembers, including the men and women who are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, should have nothing less than a seamless reintegration into society and their lives. It is my view that we need to be particularly attentive to the challenges faced by the Guard and Reserve in this transition.

Why am I so adamant about this? Because without a seamless transition, we will be failing veterans.

We have witnesses who will give us the macro view ? how things should be working according to VA, DoD, and the General Accounting Office. But our first panel of witnesses will provide the micro view. What it looks like on the front lines, if you will, for treatment. We will hear from VA outreach workers ? decorated veterans themselves ? who are trying to make sure that needs are met ? be they for care, for benefits, or for mental health. This is especially important given that some experts have calculated that one in every eight soldiers reported symptoms of PTSD.

But first, we will hear from Major Tammy Duckworth, a member of the Illinois National Guard who is receiving care at Walter Reed. On a personal note, the State of Hawaii can claim her as one of its own. And once her story is told, you will see why I am so proud.

I welcome the testimony.