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WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) today voted in favor of a bill that streamlines and improves the military health care system so that wounded returning veterans receive the care they deserve. The bill, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, was introduced in response to the appalling conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center that were recently brought to light.

The bill, H.R. 1538, passed today by a unanimous vote.

“Ensuring the health and well-being of those who risk their lives on a daily basis in service of their country is a top priority,” DeFazio said. “The conditions that our men and women in uniform faced at Walter Reed were totally unacceptable. But the problems go beyond just Walter Reed, and that’s why I am pleased this bill takes a comprehensive approach to reducing bureaucracy and improving all aspects of the care our wounded veterans receive upon returning home.”

The bill would:

1. Improve access to quality medical care for wounded service members who are outpatients at military health care facilities;
2. Begin the process of restoring the integrity and efficiency of the disability evaluation system and taking other steps to cut bureaucratic red tape;
3. Improve the transition of wounded service members from the Armed Forces to the VA system;
4. Create a new system of case managers, advocates and counselors for wounded service members to monitor progress, track cases and ensure proper care;
5. Establish a toll-free hotline for service personnel and family members to report problems with care of facilities;
6. Include an amendment introduced by Rep. Darlene Hooley that ensures wounded members of the National Guard and Reserves can receive medical care at the military treatment facility closest to their home rather than the base they deployed from, which can be thousands of miles from home;
7. Improve mental health care services; and
8. Increase the reimbursement for veterans who have to travel to receive medical care.

