

Braley Introduces Amendments to Help Tortured American Vets, Estimate the True Costs of Iraq War

Today, Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) filed two amendments to H.R. 5658, the FY2009 National Defense Authorization Act, one to help American veterans who were tortured as POWs during the Gulf War, and one to require the Defense Department to estimate the true costs of the Iraq War.

Defense Authorization Bill Being Considered by Congress this Week

Washington,
May 20 -
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'Justice for Victims of Torture' Amendment:

Braley's 'Justice for Victims of Torture' amendment would restore a provision allowing American veterans and victims of torture to pursue legal claims against their torturers. In 2002, 17 American ex-prisoners of war who were brutally tortured in Iraq during the first Persian Gulf War sued Saddam Hussein's regime, but the Bush administration blocked the POWs from collecting a judgment against Hussein.

Braley introduced a stand-alone bill-H.R. 5167, the Justice for Victims of Torture and Terrorism Act-in January with similar language as his amendment.

"American veterans tortured as prisoners of war deserve the right to seek justice," Braley said. "Brutal regimes must be held accountable for torturing American troops to ensure that it never happens again. I introduced this amendment because the President needs to put the protection of American veterans ahead of Saddam Hussein's assets."

'True Cost of the War' Amendment:

Braley's 'True Cost of the War' amendment would require the Defense Department to provide long-term cost estimates for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that include the anticipated cost of providing healthcare to returning and wounded veterans.

"One of the hidden costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is the cost of providing healthcare to our wounded and returning veterans," Braley said. "The number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is only going to increase, and we need to be ready to provide these veterans with adequate healthcare. These projected costs need to be analyzed now so we can ensure that we adequately care for American veterans in the future."

Yesterday, Rep. Braley sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Peake requesting that they provide an estimate of long-term health care costs provided by the VA. A copy of that letter is attached.

The House Rules Committee meets tomorrow to determine if the two Braley amendments will receive consideration by the full House. The FY09 Defense Authorization Act will likely be considered by the House later this week.