

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

February 07, 2011

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

The Honorable Jacob J. Lew
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary Shinseki and Director Lew:

We are writing regarding the status of the family caregivers program mandated by the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, Public Law 111-163, which was enacted on May 5, 2010. To date, implementation of this program is significantly behind the schedule required by law. The statutory deadline for the full implementation of this program was January 30, 2011, yet not even an initial plan has been completed to this point. We are troubled by this apparent inaction.

Among the critically needed benefits and services that are being withheld from family caregivers are instruction and training in the provision of care, respite care, technical assistance, counseling, and a living stipend for those who must give up their jobs or work limited hours to provide care to their loved one. This law also requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit a plan for the implementation of the family caregiver program. That report was due to the Committee 180 days after the enactment of the law, which was November 1, 2010. At this point, the report is more than three months late.

We also note that the National Defense Authorization Act, Public Law 111-383, tied the Department of Defense's stipend for caregiver services to the amounts of the caregiver stipend to be developed under Public Law 111-163. As a result, any further delay in implementing the caregiver program hinders the implementation of the Defense Department's program as well.

We know you share our view that very seriously injured veterans and servicemembers should not be made to suffer by being denied care essential to daily living. Indeed, we noted the commitments made in the President's most recent State of the Union address, and his comments on the recent release of the report on services for military families, which seem to support prompt assistance to those who have served the nation. The caregivers program is one of the most important ways to assist the families of our servicemembers and veterans and we ask for the immediate completion of any further work so that efforts to implement this program can proceed.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
Chairman



Richard Burr
Ranking Member



Daniel K. Akaka
Senator



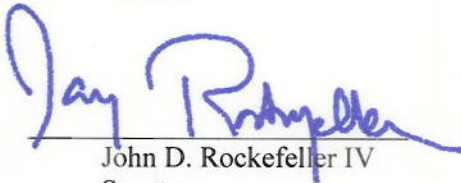
Charles Grassley
Senator



Bernard Sanders
Senator



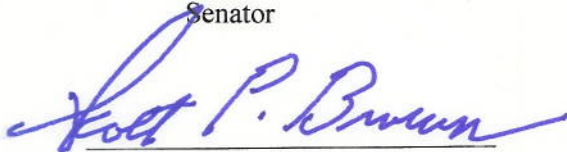
James Inhofe
Senator



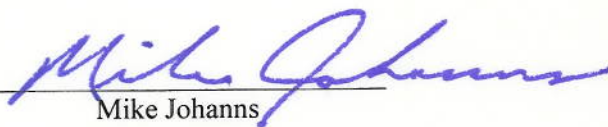
John D. Rockefeller IV
Senator



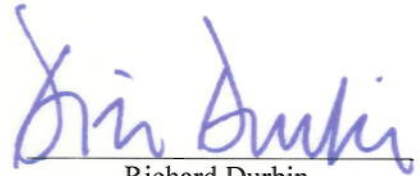
Debbie Stabenow
Senator



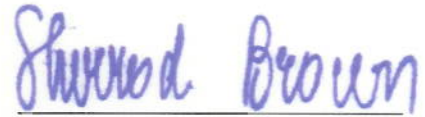
Scott P. Brown
Senator



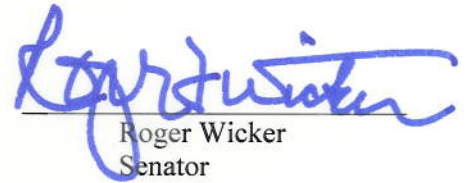
Mike Johanns
Senator



Richard Durbin
Senator



Sherrod Brown
Senator



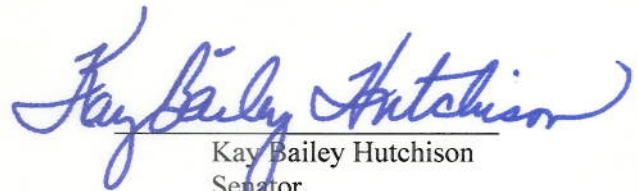
Roger Wicker
Senator



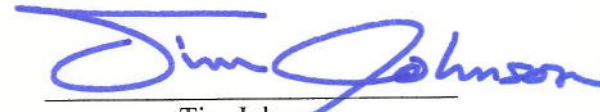
Mark Begich
Senator



Claire McCaskill
Senator



Kay Bailey Hutchison
Senator



Tim Johnson
Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
Senator