



NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

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February 9, 2015

The Honorable Sean P. Duffy
House of Representatives
1208 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, MD
House of Representatives
1319 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Walz
House of Representatives
1034 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressmen Duffy, Ruiz and Walz:

Thank you for introducing H.R. 353, the Veterans' Access to Hearing Health Act of 2015.

Many of the more than half a million National Guardsmen who have deployed operationally since 9/11 have suffered hearing loss injuries requiring treatment from the VA. Untreated hearing loss can lead to social isolation, depression, Alzheimer's or dementia, diminished personal relationships and loss of income.

Obtaining timely and convenient health-care services for hearing through the VA is challenging. The VA is not able to keep up with the demand for audiology services arising from tinnitus and hearing loss, the two most prominent disabilities for which veterans seek care. Wait times for appointments are unacceptable. Many veterans also are not receiving adequate support or hearing-aid adjustments and may leave the VA with problems unresolved. Veterans with limited mobility and transportation issues have difficulty accessing distant VA clinics with audiology services. Use of hearing-aid specialists through the fee-for-service network could help because many operate in rural areas and perform home and nursing home visits.

H.R. 353 would solve the problem of inadequate access to VA hearing health care by adding hearing-aid specialists to the VA audiology team.

NGAUS strongly supports and urges passage of H.R. 353, the Veterans' Access to Hearing Health Act of 2015. Thank you for your leadership in supporting our wounded veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gus Hargett".

Gus Hargett
Major General, USA, (Ret)
President