



## *Vietnam Veterans of America*

8719 Colesville Road, Suite 100 • Silver Spring, MD 20910 • Telephone (301) 585-4000

Faxes: Main (301) 585-0519 • Advocacy (301) 585-3180 • Communications (301) 585-5245

Finance (301) 585-5542 • Veterans Benefits (301) 585-2614

*A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress*

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
SR-412 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6375

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Your very recently introduced "Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014" is, at 352 pages, almost an omnibus bill in and of itself. Because S. 1950 embraces so many important and relevant fixes, enhancements, and advances, all of which spell "good news" for veterans and our families, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) unreservedly supports its enactment into black-letter law.

Several of the issues S. 1950 addresses can be found in our Legislative Agenda and Policy Initiatives for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress; others make for just good common sense. These include the extension to all vets with a "serious service-connected disability of eligibility for participation" in the family caregiver program now open only to the catastrophically injured or wounded after 9/11, and the provision of a program on assisted living for children born with spina bifida of Vietnam vets and certain Korea service vets. Taking note of too many out of shape vets, S. 1950 calls for the creation of a program on health promotion for overweight and obese vets through fitness center memberships. It also provides for the restoration of dental services for veterans and, at the same time, would start a pilot program on expanding and furnishing dental care to all enrolled veterans; and it clarifies that fertility counseling and treatment are medical services which the VA Secretary may furnish to vets like other medical services.

Your bill also calls for advance appropriations for most of the rest of the VA, which is welcomed by just about every veterans service organization; and the repeal of the most unwelcome cut in the annual adjustment for benefits for military retirees under the age of 62 that was part of the bipartisan omnibus budget bill – H.R. 3547 – which finally got Congress bargaining and moving again.

Now is the time, of course, while there is still a shooting war going on, to maximize the benefits that veterans have earned and deserve. You are to be commended, sir, as are your staff and the members of your committee, for the work you have done in fashioning this remarkable piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Rowan".

John Rowan  
National President