

## Coalition Drafts Benefits & Delivery Improvement Act Partners:

Empowering Veterans and its coalition partners, Veterans for Common Sense (VCS) and Veterans and Military Families for Progress (VMFP) have drafted legislation designed eliminate the "third worldly" backlog of claims at the VA and to speed the implementation of the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act and the GI Bill for the 21st Century. We plan a major lobbying effort during the upcoming Congressional session.

The backlog of claims before the VA has continued to grow to unconscionable levels. There are currently over 800,000 claims in the backlog. Waiting times for care often exceed a year. the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act was supposed to ease this problem. Sadly the implement of this vital legislation is lagging. During June 2008 hearings the House VA committee chided the VA for violating the law by missing implementation deadlines.

Similarly the lagging implementation of the GI Bill for the 21st Century is lagging and putting the timely delivery of educational benefits at risk.

The Benefits & Delivery Improvement Act is designed to ease these problems by:

- "Presumptive Approval" at the time a completed claim is submitted.
- Suspension of bonuses for high ranking VA officials if backlog exceeds 100,00.
- Requiring service members to undergo classes in VA benefits before discharge.
- Requiring disabled veterans to be provided immediate access to benefits.
- Require both DOD and VA to mount public awareness campaigns aimed at encouraging veterans to claim earned benefits.
- Disabled service members stay on active duty until enrolled for VA benefits.