

Military and veterans health care should not be part of any national health care bill, says The American Legion

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WASHINGTON - The national commander of the nation's largest veterans service organization has reacted to tonight's urgent call by President Barack Obama for national health care reform.

"While The American Legion appreciates the complexity of the healthcare reform challenge facing the President and Congress," said David K. Rehbein, "on behalf of our nation's 26-million veterans and the nearly two million personnel now on active duty in more than 130 countries, we urge Congress to ensure that veterans' and military health care not be part of any national health care bill. They should be exempt in the legislation."

Rehbein added, "Our nation must maintain its long standing tradition that veterans' and military health care systems will remain independent and focused on our most deserving citizens.

"The American Legion has a proud tradition of securing and preserving the earned benefits of America's veterans," Rehbein said. "Ensuring timely access to quality healthcare for today's military and veterans is of paramount concern. These are the citizens who have borne our battles in previous wars as they still are in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have earned our care the hard way. We, as a nation, have an obligation to ensure that their healthcare is not compromised," he concluded.

With a current membership of 2.5 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and the mentoring of youth. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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