

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 19, 2007

Dear Colleague:

In July, we filed an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would place a temporary moratorium on the use of personality disorder discharges for those service members who have served in a combat zone. We urge you to join as a cosponsor of this important bipartisan measure.

On June 21st we wrote with 22 of our colleagues to Secretary Gates expressing our deep concern over continuing reports that personality disorder discharges have been implemented inappropriately and inconsistently. In mid-August, Dr. David Chu, Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, responded to our offices without addressing two key requests in the original letter: that DOD conduct a thorough review of all policies related to the use of this discharge; and that the military establish an independent review board to address any questionable cases. Instead, this response suggests that the Department does not believe this issue requires further examination. Dr. Chu writes: "The Department is confident in the effectiveness of the current process."

We do not share Dr. Chu's confidence. Therefore we are seeking to halt this practice until Congress can be assured that adequate safeguards are in place. Our offices continue to receive and attempt to resolve questionable cases in which service members who appear to be suffering from combat-related psychological injuries are instead facing an administrative discharge for a personality disorder. We believe that even one case of an improper diagnosis and discharge for a personality disorder is too many. Over the last six years, Defense Department records indicate that over 22,500 personality disorder discharges have been processed -- an average of 10 service members discharged each day. We owe it to our fighting forces to ensure that air-tight procedures are in place to guide this serious and lasting diagnosis.

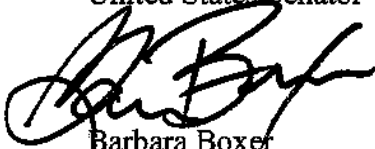
This amendment is offered as another step in our ongoing efforts to improve the quality of the Department of Defense's mental health services and care. This temporary moratorium is a commonsense safeguard to ensure a proper review and revision of current DOD policies. The amendment also gives the DOD flexibility by granting an exception to the moratorium in those cases in which a service member provides false or misleading information, or omits information about past criminal behavior during the recruitment or enlistment process. The moratorium would be lifted after the DOD reviews its current policies, ensures it is following standard clinical diagnostic practices, and establishes an independent review board to ensure that service members who have received this diagnosis may seek a review.

We hope you will join us in this worthy bipartisan effort. If you have any questions about this amendment, please contact Mark Linton in Senator Obama's office at 8-5553; or James Pitchford in Senator Bond's office at 4-6844. Thank you for your consideration.

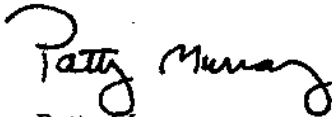
Sincerely,



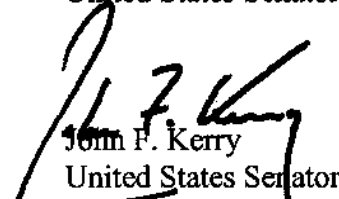
Barack Obama
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



John F. Kerry
United States Senator




Tim Johnson
United States Senator



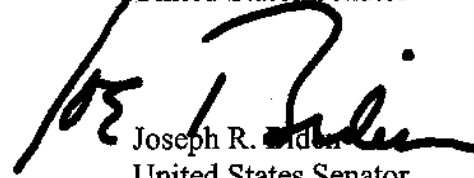
Christopher S. Bond
United States Senator



Joseph I. Lieberman
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



Joseph R. Biden
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator