



CHARLIE CRIST
GOVERNOR

October 28, 2009

The Honorable George LeMieux
United States Senate
356 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, District Of Columbia 20510

Dear Senator LeMieux:

As public servants representing Florida's veterans and their families, it is our duty to ensure that they are provided with the best care and support possible. Florida takes great pride in its many military facilities and the military families who make profound sacrifices in the name of our country.

With the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have found ourselves faced with the responsibility of providing care for large numbers of wounded veterans returning home to Florida. Many of these veterans require in-home care following their discharge from VA facilities, and often it is family members and spouses who are tasked with providing this care. To guarantee these families have the necessary benefits, I ask for your support of Senate Bill 801, the Caregiver and Veterans Health Services Act of 2009.

This legislation makes certain that the families and spouses who provide long-term care are given the support and benefits they need to care for their loved ones. Many of these family members must leave their jobs, sacrificing medical benefits and earnings in order to care for the wounded veteran. We must also consider the emotional strain these families endure. The Caregiver and Veterans Health Services Act also supports these families by providing assistance to families and spouses in the form of counseling, training, modest financial support, and healthcare coverage.

There is a large gap between the financial assistance currently provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the needs of caregivers. The Caregiver and Veterans Health Services Act aims to ultimately close this gap.

I thank you for your continued support of our troops, our returning veterans, and their families. I understand there are other bills currently under consideration in the Senate that assist military families and that you will continue to support legislation that ensures our veterans and their families receive the best possible benefits. Thank you for your commitment to our military communities. I urge you to encourage your fellow colleagues in the U.S. Senate to support them as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charlie Crist".

Charlie Crist