

Congressman Seeks Improvements in This Kind of VA Healthcare

Pro-life legislation is much more than legislation that protects the lives of the unborn, it also includes laws that protect the lives of those who have been born, particularly at times when they are most vulnerable.

With women now serving in a greater capacity in the U.S. military, and with many of them being exposed more personally to the horrors of war, the impact on them in the future as mothers is of great concern to many in the veteran community. U.S. Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.) understands those concerns and has drafted a bill that he hopes will address them.

H.R. 907, the Newborn Care Improvement Act, which he introduced in the House of Representatives this week, would lengthen the amount of time newborns of female veterans can receive medical care through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Currently, female veterans can receive up to 42 days of post-delivery care from the VA, while their infants are limited to seven days of medical care.

Collins noted that veterans may face medical challenges linked to their service, including high-risk pregnancies. For example, women who give birth within a year of being affected by PTSD are 35 percent more likely to deliver prematurely, and that means greater health risks for their children. He said:

The women who serve our nation in the armed forces deserve our profound gratitude and respect, and we can demonstrate this by guaranteeing that these service members and their children receive meaningful care through the VA. Because female service members are expected to make up 11 percent of our total veteran population by 2020, we must ensure—now more

than ever—that the VA is expanding care to meet their needs. One of the most critical needs of female veterans is appropriate pre- and post-natal coverage.

New mothers receiving medical care from the VA should feel confident that they won't have to wade through tough financial choices and confusing insurance options in order to obtain crucial care for their newborns. I've introduced the Newborn Care Improvement Act to make this level of care a reality by extending the length of time newborns can receive VA care to 42 days.

The bill, which is supported by veterans' advocacy groups, including Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Non-Commissioned Officers Association and the Blinded Veterans Association, has 18 original co-sponsors. {eoa}