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TIMOTHY J. WALZ
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VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Oversight

July 15, 2010

Support Wounded Warriors Suffering from the Signature Wounds of OIF/OEF

Co-Sign a Letter to Request Added Funding for DoD Eye Injury Research

Endorsed by the Blinded Veterans Association, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and the National Alliance for Eye Vision Research

Dear Colleague,

Eye injuries have been called one of the "signature wounds" of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Due to advances in trauma medicine and protective equipment for our service members, survival rates amongst those who suffer a potentially catastrophic attack have increased greatly. However, our wounded warriors often must endure long recovery periods to heal from the injuries of war.

Service members involved in combat operations face numerous assaults that potentially impair visual function, including traumatic eye injury from penetrating projectiles and visual disorders associated with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), which account for 16 percent of injuries in soldiers wounded/evaluated in Iraq and Afghanistan. Recent data indicate that up to 85 percent of all TBI-patients experience visual dysfunction.

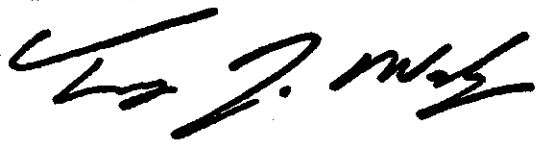
Vision, the sense most critical for optimal military performance in battlefield and support positions, is most vulnerable to acute and chronic injury. Initial treatment of acute eye injury determines the extent of vision impairment or resulting chronic eye disease and the associated need for vision rehabilitation. Research to effectively treat acute eye damage can have long-term benefits for an individual's vision health, productivity, and quality of life for the remainder of their military service and into their civilian lives, and, while the medical community has learned much in recent years, there is still much we do not know about eye injuries.

Therefore, I invite you to support our wounded warriors by joining me in respectfully requesting that the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee raise the amount of funding for the DoD's Peer Reviewed Medical Research-Vision (PRMR-Vision) program from \$3.75 million to \$10 million in FY2011. PRMR-Vision is a dedicated funding source for extramural research into immediate battlefield needs, which is not funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or the National Eye Institute (NEI) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

PRMR-Vision warrants a continued and more rigorous investment, especially since Defense Secretary Robert Gates has identified research into restoration of sight and eye-care as one of the four top defense priorities, and I look forward to working with the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee to make it a priority when it comes to funding as well

If you would like to sign on to this letter as a co-signer, please contact Tim Bertocci in Rep. Walz's office (5-4798).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim J. Walz". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tim Walz
Member of Congress