Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for the President of

the United States to pay attention to the over 100,000 Iraqi and

Afghani veterans that are coming back to our country, U.S. citizens who

have been wounded. 100,000.

This House passed a bill that increases spending in the Department of

Veterans Affairs by 18 percent, the largest increase in American

history, which is deserved because we have injured soldiers coming back

to us who are not being treated. That bill is log jammed in the Senate.

I invite the President of the United States to call over to the

leadership in the Senate to say he's going to sign that bill and to

move that bill this week.

Yesterday, I was out welcoming in an official ceremony the 983rd

Combat Engineer Unit Heavy from the State of Ohio. It's a Reserve unit,

over 1,000 soldiers who have been deployed to the theater in Iraq who

came home, and this was the official welcome home ceremony to present

them their warrior citizen flags and medals. It was a moving ceremony

honoring their valor and their service to our country.

I had the opportunity at that ceremony to talk to Mrs. Tiffany

Eckhart, the widow of Andy Eckhart, who lost his life in Iraq. And he

was on his second deployment to Iraq.

She said several things to me. She said, Marcy, my husband never

should have been deployed a second time because he had been injured in

his first deployment. He had had a head injury, and she said, I want

you to go back to Washington this week and tell the Congress and tell

the Secretary of Defense and tell the President of the United States

that every soldier who has been in combat in Iraq or in Afghanistan if

they have had a head injury, before they are sent back again, they

should be examined to make sure that there's nothing wrong, that there

isn't a problem that affects their vision or in some way affects their

functioning, which she claims is the reason for his death.

Now, if we are rotating people through so quickly and we aren't

paying attention to the soldiers who are in

theatre, particularly the Guard and Reserve, which never get the

attention that they should, shame on us. Shame on us.

The impact of these head injuries on our soldiers is serious, and

with the explosions that are occurring, we are losing 80 percent of

those who have lost their lives, 80 percent of our soldiers have died

from IEDs, which are explosive devices, or from sniper shots to the

back of the head, 80 percent. So the individual soldier is receiving

these wounds largely in the head area, or if they have heard the

explosive devices going off, they have had damage sometimes inside the

head that you can't see. You can't see. So the Department of Defense

should have a policy not to redeploy unless that soldier is reexamined.

It's almost like having shaking baby syndrome is what Mrs. Eckhart

said to me, where after a baby has been damaged, unless they are really

examined, sometimes you can't tell that there has been brain damage.

It's no different for our soldiers. She begged me to change the policy

of the Department of Defense in this regard.

In addition to that, I met so many soldiers who had come home because

the unit returned in 2005, who had other symptoms that are not being

treated. There is PTSD inside this particular battalion, but are

doctors easily available to them? No. And are they available locally?

No. If they are forced to travel somewhere because they are Reserve

members, they have got to take off work. Guess what. They have to lose

their pay because they have to go to get taken care of at a hospital 2,

3, 4 hours away from them. That's wrong. Those services should be

provided to our soldiers when they are ill, particularly if they have

something like PTSD, which demands such careful attention from a

neuropsychiatrist and the distribution of medicines and the kind of

therapeutic care that is important for them.

Another soldier came up to me. He had ripped cartilage and tendons in

his knee. He has been home for over 1\1/2\ years. He said,

Congresswoman, why didn't the DOD operate on me while I was in theater?

He said, When I came home, they discharged me. He said, You know what?

I came home. I am now in the Reserve. For me to get this taken care of,

I will be off work for week. He said, I can't afford to do that. He

said, Why didn't they tell me? Why didn't they tell me to take care of

it while I was under the umbrella of the Department of Defense?

The PTSD and neurological disorders just in that unit, now that

people have been home, while we were at the ceremony, several F-16 jets

which are based near a school overhead, you could just see the reaction

of the soldiers.

I would invite the President of the United States to urge the Senate

of the United States to move that legislation so that we can move the

resources we need into the Department of Veterans Affairs and take care

of the veterans of this country, over 100,000 of whom have come home

now who are injured.