



U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

MEDIA ALERT

Press Conference

with

U.S. Rep. Charles Bennett (D-FL)

U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV)

With our fighting men and women being protected by the most advanced military equipment in the world, shouldn't we be protecting their lives here at home?

Why: Introduction of legislation to reform CHAMPUS

When: Wednesday, February 27th at 10:00 a.m.

Where: 2107 Rayburn HOB

Contact: Laurie Cody, 225-2501 and Steve Spina 225-3452

CHAMPUS

- The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Service (CHAMPUS) is the military's health insurance program for an estimated 9.2 million people

The Herald-Dispatch — Huntington, WV, Sunday, Nov. 11, 1990

Some veterans falling through cracks in health care coverage

Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — When Andy Cox retired from the U.S. Army in 1977 after 22 years in the military, he took for granted the promise of lifelong health care.

That was until he fell off a ladder in 1987, suffering a traumatic head injury which left him a quadriplegic — unable to speak, even swallow.

Costs for his around-the-clock treatment were high but his military-sponsored health insurance was good — while it lasted. But provision in the law stripped him of that coverage and put him under the Medicare program — with fewer benefits.

"There's was one thing they forgot to tell him when he was fighting for his country for 22 years," said Cox's wife, Terry. "You only get to keep your health insurance if you stay healthy."

Cox isn't alone. Many military retirees don't find out until it's too late about provisions that end coverage under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services — CHAMPUS — if they are disabled and require continuous medical care for longer than two years, or when they reach the age of 65.

Under the 1972 law, when CHAMPUS ends, the government-subsidized health care plan Medicare takes over. But veterans say the swap cheats them of benefits they earned, leaving them with coverage that is not nearly so extensive in severe cases like Cox's.

For Cox, 53, who has remained almost motionless in bed since his injury, Medicare has been of little help. It offers limited provisions for home health care, and none for him since his case was classified as "maintenance."

The couple has been left financially devastated.

Mrs. Cox also has fired off letters to President Bush, congressmen, senators and military officials asking that the law be changed to allow her husband back in the CHAMPUS program, which covers people in the military, military retirees and dependents when they seek care in civilian hospitals because of lack of space in or distance from a military facility.

She's gotten back a stack of letters, but no action.

"I truly sympathize with your situation and concerns," responded Capt. Paul T. McDavid, director of the Department of Defense's CHAMPUS office in Aurora, Colo.

"However, I am limited in authority to effect a change."

When Cox was diagnosed after his fall with a subdural hematoma — bleeding within the skull around the brain — some doctors said he would be a vegetable for the rest of his life.

With his CHAMPUS coverage, Cox received 24-hour skilled nursing care, physical and speech therapy and prescription drugs. Mrs. Cox estimates CHAMPUS was providing \$17,000 in home health care every month.

At his St. Petersburg home he slowly began to improve. No longer was he considered semicomatose. He was weaned from oxygen and his darting eyes and guttural sounds hinted that he was responding to those around him.

But last April 1, Cox's eligibility for CHAMPUS ended. Word came in a Department of Defense letter asking the veteran who retired in 1977 after serving in Korea and Germany to return his eligibility card listing coverage as "indefinite."

Mrs. Cox has been forced to sell their home and furniture, move in with her mother and scrape together \$5,500 to \$6,000 every month to provide what care she can.



Press Release

Charles E. Bennett

Member of Congress

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