

Michaud Returns from Leading Congressional Delegation to Afghanistan

Monday, April 20 2009

WASHINGTON, DC – This weekend, Representative Mike Michaud, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs’ Subcommittee on Health, returned to Andrews Air Force Base after leading a bipartisan congressional delegation to Afghanistan. Representatives Thomas Perriello (D-VA), Deborah Halvorson (D-IL), Glen Nye (D-VA), and Phil Roe (R-TN), all members of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee, joined Michaud on the trip. The Surgeon Generals of the Army and Navy also accompanied Michaud and his colleagues. The purpose of the trip was to visit forward operating bases in Afghanistan and to examine the in-theater medical care received by U.S. servicemembers. The delegation also met with Afghani President Hamid Karzai. This is Michaud’s fifth trip to the Middle East.

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“I organized this trip so that we could see first-hand the level and quality of health care being provided to our active duty servicemembers in Afghanistan,” said Michaud. “We met and talked face-to-face with key medical personnel at these facilities in order to better understand the challenges of combat health care in Afghanistan. It is crucial that my fellow committee members understand the health care services that our brave men and women receive before coming to the VA. The care provided to soldiers on the battlefield and at in-theater medical facilities is the foundation for what they will need when they enter the VA health care system.”

The delegation began their trip on Monday, April 13th and returned to Andrews Air Force Base this weekend. Michaud and his colleagues visited a hospital at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, the Bagram Hospital Complex in Afghanistan, two forward operating bases near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, and the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

“Our soldiers are bravely executing an extremely difficult mission in an environment where conditions are particularly harsh,” said Michaud. “I was humbled to be able to share meals with fellow Mainers while I was there. No matter what our policy in the region is, we must continue to make sure that we are providing top quality care to our soldiers. The information gathered during this trip will be invaluable to our work in Congress.”

Michaud has been working in Congress to promote a seamless transition from active duty soldier to veteran. Recently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) announced that they would begin joint development of a system that will ultimately contain administrative and medical information from the day an individual enters military service throughout their military career, and into the veteran phase of life. Access to electronic records is critical to the delivery of modern health care and the paperless administration of benefits within both the VA and the DOD. A lifetime electronic health record system would provide a framework to help ensure that all health care providers have the information necessary to deliver high-quality health care while reducing medical errors. The development of a Joint Virtual Lifetime Record by DOD and VA is the next step toward delivery of seamless, high-quality care to our nation’s servicemembers and veterans.

“VA and DOD need to seamlessly and transparently share data on the time, length, and locations of service. I am very pleased by the commitment of DOD and VA to create a single electronic health record to exchange medical information of patients who are active-duty members and veterans,” Michaud said. “We must now build on this cooperation and make sure that all our veterans get the best possible care.”

VA services and benefits become available shortly after a service member is discharged. A Joint Virtual Lifetime Record will capture everything from inception of active duty service through application for veterans care and benefits. This improved data organization should cut down on the errors and problems that veterans confront.

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