

One of my top priorities in Congress is to ensure that our returning service members receive the best health care possible. Due to the frequent use of improvised explosive devices by the enemy, the signature wound from our nation's missions in Iraq and Afghanistan has been traumatic brain injury (TBI). While the injury varies widely in terms of severity, treatment, and length of recovery, TBI has been linked to concussions, cognitive impairment, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and depression.

In recent years Congress has worked to improve TBI treatment for our wounded warriors. In 2008, Congress required the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) to coordinate their research and treatment of this injury. Congress also required the VA to improve the process for transitioning service members to the VA health system. In 2010, Congress mandated that DOD expand health care examinations to include TBI and then report to Congress on its progress. Further, in February 2010 I [joined several colleagues](#) in requesting the DOD and the VA to publicly report on how often the highly regarded Military Acute Concussion Evaluation (MACE) is administered to troops who may have suffered a brain injury. [In](#)

[response](#)

, the Defense Department emphasized its commitment to TBI detection but indicated that such a report would be inaccurate because the lack of information technology in remote areas and combat zones would result in incomplete data.

More recently, last week I joined members of the House and Senate in [urging](#) Defense Secretary Robert Gates to move quickly to ensure that TRICARE, the Department's health insurance program, provides cognitive rehabilitation for service members who have received brain injuries. This treatment is critical because TBI frequently impairs cognitive abilities such as perception and thinking. Unfortunately, DOD is still studying TBI and, with rare exception, does not cover cognitive rehabilitation even though a number of experts such as the National Institutes of Health support it as a proven treatment for TBI. Please know that I will continue to closely monitor this issue to ensure that our wounded service members receive the proper treatment from TRICARE for every aspect of this injury.