

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleague,

It is with great enthusiasm that we declare our support for Tim Walz to lead the Democrats on the Veterans' Affairs Committee next Congress.

First and foremost, Tim is the most senior enlisted Veteran to ever serve in Congress. He understands Veterans and their needs, listens to them, and has been an effective advocate in Congress to improve their lives. Tim has served on the Veterans' Affairs Committee **for more than nine years** and has been a tireless advocate for our nation's Veterans. He is also the only Veteran to currently serve on the Democratic side of the Committee.

As proof of his advocacy, Tim has been endorsed by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN), the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS), and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) to become the next Ranking Member of the Committee.

Our VA system is in crisis, and now, more than ever, Democrats need a strong, respected voice to address these problems head on and build the coalition required to get Veterans and their families the care they deserve. Tim knows the issues, seeks input from all corners of our diverse Caucus to get things done, and is respected by the Veterans' community. It's time to make him our next leader of this very important Committee.

Tim is simply the most qualified candidate to lead our Caucus on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. We hope you will join us in our support.

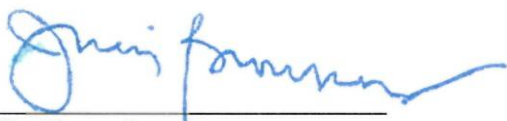
Sincerely,



Beto O'Rourke
Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney
Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



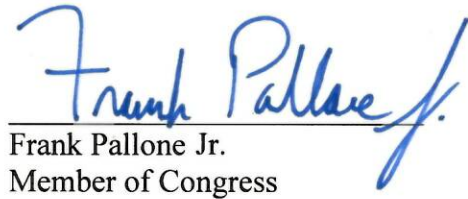
Tulsi Gabbard
Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress


Joe Courtney
Member of Congress


Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone Jr.
Member of Congress


Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress


Kathleen Rice
Member of Congress


Ron Kind
Member of Congress


Richard Nolan
Member of Congress


Elizabeth Esty
Member of Congress



Gene Green
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

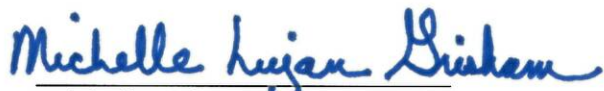

Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress


Gwen Graham
Member of Congress


James Himes
Member of Congress


Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress


Jim Cooper
Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress



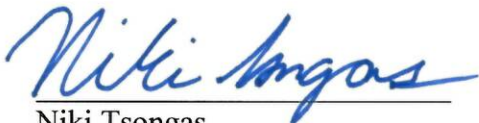
Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



David Loebsack
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



Ann Kuster
Member of Congress



Daniel Lipinski
Member of Congress



Brad Ashford
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Michael Doyle
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Joseph Kennedy III
Member of Congress



James McGovern
Member of Congress



Alan Grayson
Member of Congress



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell Jr.
Member of Congress



Denny Heck
Member of Congress



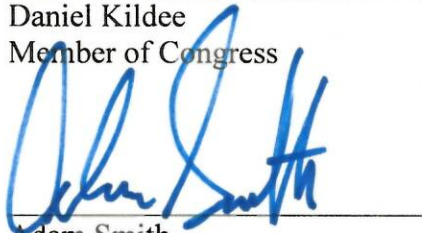
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



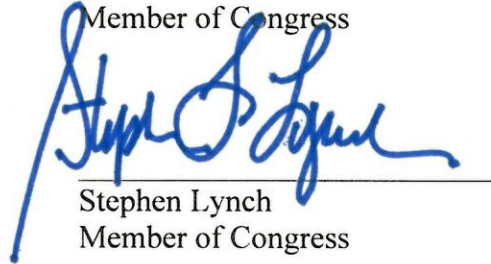
Daniel Kildee
Member of Congress



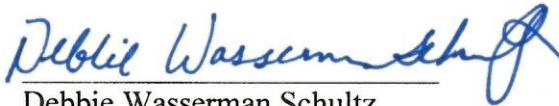
John Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Stephen Lynch
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress



Vietnam Veterans of America

8719 Colesville Road, Suite 100, Silver Spring, MD 20910 • Telephone (301) 585-4000 • Main
Fax (301) 585-0519 • Advocacy (301) 585-3180 • Communications (301) 585-2691

www.vva.org

A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

18 November 2016

Honorable Tim Walz
1034 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-2301

Dear Congressman Walz,

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) extends our most sincere gratitude for your stalwart commitment to veterans. As you well know, the founding principle of VVA is “Never Again will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another.” Through your service on the Armed Services Committee and on the Veterans Affairs Committee you provide essential help us in fulfilling our core mission. While the original intent of our founding principle was to instill a sense of duty in veterans to look to the future and care for younger generations, it is clear that with you, sense of duty goes both ways as our generation ages.

We thank you for standing up against GI Bill Basic Allowance for Housing cuts that would shift the cost of the Global War on Terror to the young folks who volunteered to fight it, along with leading the way on so many other issues of vital importance to veterans. We thank you for your balanced approach in holding the VA accountable for its shortcomings and failings, while at the same time always being open to work with VA officials to achieve the best possible outcomes for veterans. But most of all, we thank you for your service to our country, both in and out of uniform.

VVA looks forward to continuing our work with you in the same positive manner as we have since you entered the House of Representatives in early 2007. While there will be many and varied challenges in the upcoming 115th Congress, we know that you will always be there to help lead the way by thoughtful and considered leadership.

Sincerely,

Rick

Rick Weidman

Executive Director for Policy & Government Affairs

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)

rweidman@vva.org



NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES, INC.

ONE MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NORTHWEST WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001 (202) 789-0031 FAX (202) 682-9358

July 12, 2016

Honorable Timothy Walz
U.S. House of Representatives
1034 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Walz,

On behalf of the National Guard Association of the United States, I am writing to thank you for your tireless work in Congress, not only for our members, but for all of the honorable men and women of our Armed Services. For more than 30 years, you have served the United States with distinction in representing the constituents of Minnesota's 1st Congressional District and as a Sergeant Major in the Army National Guard.

During your service in Congress, NGAUS has always been able to count on you to ask thoughtful questions and provide proactive engagement on issues of importance to the members of the National Guard. Your leadership has led to the passage of an incredible list of legislation over the years, including the Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act, Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act of 2015, the Clay Hunt SAV Act, and the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010.

Additionally, having served for 24 years in the Army National Guard and being the highest ranking enlisted service member to ever serve in Congress, your military experience and insight has and will continue to significantly enhance the work of the House Veterans Affairs Committee on behalf of so many. Your outreach and collaboration with the veteran advocacy community is among the most dynamic of any Member of Congress.

With your service to our country, you have illustrated dedication to issues that affect our members and the wider military and veteran community. I would once again like to thank you for your committed service and look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Gus Hargett
Major General, USA (Ret.)
President, NGAUS



ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES

3133 Mount Vernon Avenue • Alexandria, VA 22305-2640 • (703) 519-3846 • Fax (703) 519-3849 • www.eangus.org

July 22, 2016

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madame Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States which represents the interests of over 400,000 enlisted men and women of the Army and Air National Guard, we endorse Representative Tim Walz (D-MN) for Ranking Member on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs (HVAC).

Even though Representative Walz is a life member of our association, it is not because of his membership that we endorse him. Representative Walz is a retired Command Sergeant Major with over twenty-four years of service in the Army National Guard and he is the highest ranking enlisted servicemember to serve in the U.S. Congress. His breadth of military leadership and experience that has served him well during his tenure in the House of Representatives will no doubt benefit the Committee on Veterans Affairs, if he is named Ranking Member.

Representative Walz and his staff have worked closely with Military Service Organizations and Veterans Service Organizations as Congress has considered the annual Defense Authorization Acts and as the House Committee on Veterans Affairs considers its legislative priorities. Representative Walz takes time to hear the concerns of all organizations to better understand the thoughts and concerns of every branch of service and service component.

For this reason, and for his tireless efforts as the House National Guard and Reserves Component Caucus Co-Chair, our organization honored Representative Walz with the 2015 G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Eagle Award. It is without hesitation that our members support him as our number one choice for Ranking Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and we urge his positive selection. Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Yoakum".

Frank Yoakum
Sergeant Major, US Army (retired)
Executive Director



July 11, 2016

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives
233 Cannon H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Tim Walz for House Veteran Affairs Committee Ranking Member

Dear Madame Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN), we strongly urge you to support Congressman Tim Walz as the next Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veteran's Affairs (HVAC).

AUSN, the premier advocate for our nation's sailors both active and retired and their families recognizes the importance of our partnership with the HVAC Ranking Member. The Ranking Member of this Committee is a critical partner of our organization, ensuring bipartisan cooperation, legislation and solutions to meet our mutual goals. Therefore, it is important to AUSN that you support and select the most qualified Member of the Committee to serve as its Ranking Member.

As a retired Command Sergeant Major, Congressman Walz truly understands the needs of our Nation's Veterans. Congressman Walz, having served for 24 years in the Army National Guard, is the highest ranking enlisted service member to ever serve in Congress and his military experience has and will continue to significantly enhance the Democratic caucus's contributions to this Committee. He has been intimately involved in helping pass legislation to improve care to wounded veterans, to help veterans seeking employment after they leave the service, and to eliminate the red tape that veterans must navigate in order to receive their benefits, among many other notable accomplishments.

AUSN has always been able to count on Mr. Walz to provide thoughtful questions and proactive engagement while serving on the Committee. This past year, for the second time AUSN awarded Congressman Walz with the association's National Legislative Advocacy Award for his superb leadership in ensuring that our Veterans have a strong and powerful voice in the United States Congress. Representative Walz has tirelessly advocated for the continued change of culture at the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, his introduction of: H.R. 1384, the Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act; and H.R. 4124, the Support America's Armed Forces Reserve Component Retirees Act of 2015, have been vital towards raising public awareness of the needs of our Nation's greatest assets, our Veterans. His actions have made an outstanding difference for our Navy Veterans and the United States as a whole. Congressman Walz's initiative and dedication to duty reflected credit upon himself and were in keeping with AUSN's highest traditions.

AUSN strongly encourages you to support Mr. Walz for Ranking Member of HVAC. We believe that he is the most qualified candidate for the job.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Little
Director of Legislative Affairs
Association of the United States Navy



CDR Bill Manofsky, USN (ret)
V.P. of Legislative Affairs
Association of the United States Navy



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICERS
25 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20001

July 13, 2016

Re: Ranking Member of House Veterans Affairs Committee

Dear US House of Representative Democratic Caucus,

It has been brought to this Associations attention that Representative Tim Walz is seeking to serve as the ranking member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC). Rep. Walz's commitment to his fellow veteran and has been nothing short of outstanding during his tenure on this committee. He reaches out to our association for input that will affect the ground level deployment of passed legislation, policy and practice. In doing so he gives our 1,800 local veterans advocates the opportunity to learn the rules and regulations and provide answers to the veterans that we serve locally.

Rep. Walz has made a career out of service to his country and few in Congress have a better understanding of the issues affecting our veteran community. Every Veterans Day we hear speakers explain that nobody will understand the sacrifices made by our veterans with the exception of fellow veterans. As the only Democrat veteran serving on the HVAC we feel that his leadership will give veterans the voice they desperately need and deserve in what is to most certainly be a time of much debate.

The National Association of County Veteran Service Officers believes Rep. Walz is the best Representative to fulfill the role as ranking member and we proudly give our support to him in this race.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ed Zackery
President, NACVSO



Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc.
Post Office Box 5235
Slidell, Louisiana 70469-5235

John B. Wells
Commander USN (Ret)
Executive Director

Admitted to practice:
Louisiana
Pennsylvania
District of Columbia

November 7, 2016

The Honorable Tim Walz, Member of Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
1034 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Walz:

I was very heartened to hear that you are interested in becoming the Ranking Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee in the 115th Congress. Your experience is critical given the fact that the Committee will now have a new Chairman.

I appreciate the fact that you have been very supportive of veterans' needs and very sensitive to problems within the VA. You have been a great listener and I admire the way you have championed veterans and their causes. It has been refreshing to see your no nonsense approach to the challenges that exist today and your support of common sense solutions,

The 114th Congress has been focused on ferreting out and resolving problems within the Department of Veterans Affairs that have blocked medical care and benefits for veterans. Both parties have worked towards bipartisan solution and the Veterans Affairs Committee stands as a shining example of how Congress should work. I know that you will continue to support bipartisan efforts and to work with the Chairman to support our nation's veterans.

I am especially heartened by your support for the Blue Water Navy veterans in their goal to rescind the unconscionable "boots on the ground" policy, as well as the Toxic Exposure Research Act and the Agent Orange Extension Act. I also appreciate the responsiveness of your staff on cortical matters such as the recent National Guard bonus fiasco. We know that you will continue to highlight matters important to veterans.

On behalf of Military Veterans Advocacy (MVA), we applaud and support your efforts in support of veterans. You enjoy our complete confidence and we know that you will do a great job as Ranking Member.

May God bless you for your efforts on behalf of Veterans.

Sincerely,


John B. Wells
Executive Director



125 N. West Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

1-800-FRA-1924
703-683-1400
703-549-6610 (fax)

November 18, 2016

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Fax: 202-225-8259

Dear Leader Pelosi:

We have been informed that Representative Tim Walz is seeking appointment as the Ranking Member on the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC). FRA strongly supports his appointment to this all important position. Rep. Walz enlisted in the Army National Guard at age 17 and retired 24 years later at the rank of Command Sergeant Major. Rep. Walz understands the needs of veterans and their families. Earlier this year, Rep. Walz was awarded FRA's Pinnacle Award for his steadfast commitment to helping all veterans. He has been intimately involved in numerous legislative proposals to help veterans. As Ranking Member, his enthusiasm and knowledge of veteran's issues would boost Democratic participation in this important committee.

FRA wholeheartedly supports his appointment as the HVAC Ranking Member for the 115th Congress for our Veterans.

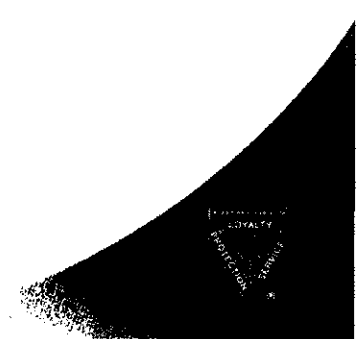
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

THOMAS J. SNEE

National Executive Director
Master Chief Petty Officer, USN, (Ret)

TJS:jd:tw





**IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN
VETERANS OF AMERICA**

Nov. 29, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America's (IAVA) more than 425,000 members, I thank you for the work you and your colleagues have done to improve the lives of veterans. We look forward to building on our past successes to find common ground between your caucuses in support of the post-9/11 generation of veterans as we embark upon the 115th Congress.

As you're aware, the percentage of Members of Congress who have served in the military has decreased dramatically in the last several decades to only about 20% today, down from a peak of more than 70% in the House and Senate in 1971. Reports also suggest that the share of veterans serving on Congressional staffs is now less than 1%.

We applaud the many in Congress who have not served in uniform and work tirelessly on behalf of veterans, but believe that the Committee on Veterans Affairs should be led by veterans whenever possible. Military service understandably gives one a unique perspective, not only on the defense of our nation, but how we care for those defending it when they return home. And with so few veterans in halls of Congress to help shape the debate, it's essential that we at least have veterans guiding the agenda for the work before the Committee.

We are incredibly optimistic about the work we'll be able to get done together on the road ahead and thank you in advance for having our backs on that journey. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

Paul Rieckhoff
Founder and CEO
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)

CAPITOL OFFICE:
1034 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2472



AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

MANKATO OFFICE:
527½ SOUTH FRONT STREET
MANKATO, MN 56001
(507) 388-2149

TIMOTHY J. WALZ
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
FIRST DISTRICT, MINNESOTA
WWW.WALZ.HOUSE.GOV

ROCHESTER OFFICE:
1202½ 7TH STREET NW,
SUITE 211
ROCHESTER, MN 55901
(507) 388-2149

July 14, 2016

TOLL FREE #:
(877) 846-9259

Dear Colleague,

I write to humbly ask for your support to serve as Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs in the 115th Congress. Ensuring care for our Veterans must be our foremost priority when selecting our leadership on this vital committee. In the wake of recent mismanagement within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), our nation's Veterans and their families need an experienced and faithful advocate guiding the Committee. We need a leader who can work with the Veteran Service Organizations, the VA, and Veterans themselves to develop effective policy and be prepared to lead the entire Committee as Chairman when we retake the House.

As a retired Command Sergeant Major with 24 years of service in the Army National Guard, I am the highest ranking enlisted soldier to ever serve in Congress. I possess the passion, knowledge and legislative experience necessary to be the lead Democratic voice on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. The VA continues to face significant challenges, and, in the coming years, more than a million service members will become Veterans. I believe I am the right person, at the right time, to lead a committee whose sole purpose is to honor our commitment to those who have "borne the battle" and given this nation so much.

Caring for our men and women in uniform and their families has been my priority since being elected to the House of Representatives from Minnesota's First District. Over the past 9 years on the Committee, that priority has translated into the following efforts:

- fighting the scourge of Veteran suicide with the Clay Hunt SAV Act,
- ensuring Vietnam War Veterans exposed to Agent Orange and Veterans from every theater of operations that have been exposed to the toxins of war receive appropriate VA benefits and care,
- reducing the VA benefits backlog,
- enhancing mental health care services to Veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental health conditions,
- co-founding the bipartisan and bicameral Congressional Veterans Jobs Caucus, which works with our nation's employers to increase the awareness and promotion of hiring Veterans, and
- serving on the conference committee responsible for finalizing legislation to reform the VA, which included many of my priorities.

My strong advocacy for the Veterans' community in Congress has garnered recognition and awards from leading Veteran Service Organizations, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), Jewish War Veterans of the USA (JWV), Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), U.S. Army Women's Foundation Hall of Fame, American Veterans (AMVETS), Association of the United States Navy (AUSN), the Reserve Officer Association (ROA), HillVets, and the Fleet Reserve Association (FRA).

In fact, within the past week, I've been endorsed by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the Association of the United States Navy (AUSN), the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS), and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) to become the next Ranking Member of the Committee.

Although I am incredibly honored to be acknowledged by these leading Veteran Service Organizations and advocates, I know there is much more work to be done.

Our VA system is in crisis, and now, more than ever, Democrats need a strong, respected voice to address these problems head on and build the coalition required get Veterans and their families the care they deserve. I humbly ask for your support to serve as Ranking Member as we continue our most important work together: to ensure care and support for Veterans and their families.

Thank you for your consideration, your friendship and your public service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tim Walz", written in a cursive style.

Tim Walz
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Walz Recognized for Leadership by Leading Veterans Organizations

- **VFW Legislator of the Year Award** presented by Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Department of Minnesota, 2008
- **Certificate of Appreciation** presented by Disabled American Veterans (DAV), 2008
- **Medal of Merit** presented by Jewish War Veterans of the USA (JWV), 2010
- **Silver Helmet Congressional Award** presented by American Veterans (AMVETS), 2010
- **Legislator of the Year Award** presented by National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NAVCSO), 2010
- **Certificate of Appreciation for Outstanding Support** presented by United States Navy, 2011
- **Certificate of Life Membership** presented by The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), 2011
- **Award of Merit** presented by The Military Coalition, 2011
- **G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Eagle Award** presented by the Enlisted Association of The National Guard the United States (EANGUS), 2012
- **Legislation Recognition Award** presented by Blinded Veteran Association (BVA), 2012
- **Certificate of Appreciation** presented by United States Army War College, 2012
- **Inspirational Leadership Award** presented by Military Order of Purple Heart (MOPH), 2012
- **National Legislative Advocacy Awardees** presented by Association of the United States Navy (AUSN), 2012
- **L. Mendel Rivers Award (National Legislator of the Year Award)** presented by the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), 2013
- **Certificate of Appreciation** presented by Mankato Disabled American Veterans Chapter 10, 2013
- **Congressional Leadership Award (National Legislator of the Year Award)** presented by Disabled American Veterans (DAV), 2014
- **Colonel Arthur T. Marix Congressional Leadership Award** presented by Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), 2014
- **Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony "Honoring Service and Preserving History"** presented by U.S. Army Women's Foundation, 2014
- **Charles Dick Medal of Merit** presented by National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), 2014
- **Commendation** presented by Minnesota Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America, endorsing the Colonel Arthur T. Marix Congressional Leadership Award, 2014
- **G.V "Sonny" Montgomery Eagle Award** presented by Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS), 2015
- **Veterans Hearing Health Champion Award** presented by International Hearing Society, 2015
- **Pinnacle Award** presented by The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA), 2016.
- **HillVets 100 of 2015 (U.S. House of Representatives)** presented by the HillVets, 2016
- **Honorary Membership**, presented by Reserve Officer Association (ROA), 2016



House Democrats have opportunity for redemption in selecting VA Cmte Leader

BY CHRISTOPHER NEIWEEM AND ANTHONY PAOLINO, CONTRIBUTOR - 11/29/16 03:51 PM EST

Just In...

When bureaucracy gets in the way of preventative care

CONTRIBUTORS — 0S AGO

Corker praises Trump's foreign policy 'instincts'

NEWS — 17M 50S AGO

House Democrats have opportunity for redemption in selecting VA Cmte Leader

CONTRIBUTORS — 29M 46S AGO

Internet Archive putting database in Canada to keep it from Trump

POLICY — 30M 38S AGO

Real budget reform starts from the inside

CONTRIBUTORS — 45M 45S AGO

McConnell: Trump's voter fraud claims 'irrelevant'

FLOOR ACTION — 46M 5S AGO

Gingrich: Trump has no obligation to hold news conferences

BALLOT BOX — 48M 6S AGO

Incoming Dem lawmakers urge rejection of campaign finance 'riders'

POLICY — 48M 44S AGO

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Two years ago, Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN) — the veteran community's strongly preferred candidate to command a leadership post on the House Veterans Affairs Committee — was placed to the side by House Democratic leadership while competing for the House VA Cmte leadership job.

This move was made (at the beginning of the last Congress) for political and inner-caucus reasons and cleared the way for Rep. Corrine Brown (D-Fl), a longer serving Congresswoman, known for her hyper partisan persona, and combative working relationship with Republicans on the committee.

Politics backfired.

Rep. Brown was hostile toward the Republicans during her time leading the Committee, routinely would show up to congressional hearings late and unprepared, and in the end was defeated in her primary election after suffering a great decline in public approval stemming from her federal indictment on corruption charges.

This decision angered those of us in the veteran community who urged the House Leadership to not put politics in front of the needs of the veteran

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community by selecting Brown for the job in the first place, despite a stronger candidate being available who shared our values.

Fortunately, Mr. Walz is back at the top of the list to occupy the job he should have been selected for two years ago, and this time the Democrats can achieve redemption and get this right.

Walz is a veterans' veteran, having served 24 years in the Army National Guard he achieved the rank of Command Sergeant Major and milestone of being the highest ranking enlisted soldier to ever serve in Congress.

However, that fact is only the surface of his qualifications which include: leading a bipartisan coalition and getting a major veteran suicide prevention bill passed (Clay Hunt SAV Act) through a Republican Congress and signed by President Barack Obama that cemented his bi-partisan negotiating chops at a time when none of us thought partisan politics could be put aside—even for veterans.

He negotiated effectively to elevate many other legislative priorities and policy issues during his tenure on the VA committee as well, and attracts hope from those of us in the veteran community through his affable and accessible persona, and workhorse reputation. Congressman Tim Walz has been a proven leader for Veterans, and understand the unique needs of our community, he is one of us, and frankly we need him.

Challenging him in his race to become the House VA leader is Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA). Mr. Takano despite a very positive attitude and genuine interest in fixing the problems facing our community, lacks the experience, record, and toughness we need at this time.

He has been far too favorable and lenient on the VA during a period of some of the biggest scandals of our lifetime, does not personally connect with the veteran community beyond a surface level, and frankly, has significantly less experience than Mr. Walz.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is now at a national tipping point, still reeling from a damaged image stemming from the 2014 scandal involving manipulated healthcare waiting lists and now has been the target of more frequent calls for privatization (at least some of its functions) from within Congress and throughout the nation.

The problems at the VA, combined with a very partisan post-election national tone, is why more than ever veterans need a stable, bi-partisan, substantive leader on the committee that can negotiate effectively and get things back on track.

That candidate to fix things was Walz then, and is Walz now.

Many prominent veteran service organizations and veteran advocates have both publicly and privately supported Tim Walz. Last time around, we were asking, this time we are urging House Democrats to not make the same mistake twice.

The House Democrats got the VA leader choice wrong last time; now they have a chance to get it right. The House Democratic Caucus needs to stop putting politics in front of our veterans. We need leadership and we need it now, and the choice is clear-- we need Tim Walz for the Democratic leader on the House VA Cmte.

Chris Neiweem is an Iraq War veteran, defense and military policy analyst, and executive director of the Neiweem Group, a government affairs firm. He has served as an expert witness in Congress before both House and Senate Committees and regularly appears on radio and television, covering issues that impact the military and veterans population.

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