

## WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT OUTRAGED AT WHITE HOUSE FAILURE TO HONOR COMMITMENT TO MILITARY FAMILIES IN DESPERATE NEED

### **Administration Misses Deadline for Implementing Support for Caregivers of Wounded Warriors; Nation's Military Families Still Waiting for Promised Help—**

Washington, D.C. (February 9, 2011) – Despite the recent White House announcement of a governmentwide effort to support military families, the Administration has failed to meet an important deadline to provide comprehensive support for the thousands of American families caring for severely wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. As a result, these families continue to struggle with escalating financial, emotional and health issues – even though Congress has taken action to ease their burden.

In May of 2010, President Obama signed into law the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act, which directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide comprehensive support services to family caregivers of severely wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The law established a clear deadline – January 31, 2011.

And yet the deadline came and passed, without a hint of action from the VA. And now, help appears to be almost a year away. The VA continues to face unexplained and unacceptable bureaucratic delays while families of our nation's most severely injured service members continue to wait and suffer.

“Our government made a promise to the dedicated families caring for our nation's most severely wounded women and men in uniform – and that promise has not been fulfilled,” said Steve Nardizzi, Executive Director of Wounded Warrior Project. “We are outraged and distressed that this missed deadline comes just days after the White House announced a new initiative to strengthen military families.”

“If bureaucracy and red tape are delaying help for the families of these brave men and women, that's inexcusable,” Nardizzi said. “If the program is facing budget cuts, that's even worse. We cannot, and in good conscience, should not balance the budget on the backs of those whom we've asked to sacrifice so much for our country.”

Every day, family members of injured service members are making great personal sacrifices to provide daily care to their loved ones, often giving up careers and putting their own lives on hold to be long-term, fulltime caregivers.

“These caregivers have suffered physically, emotionally, psychologically and financially – many for years,” said Nardizzi. “Every day these families are made to wait is a day too long. Until this law is fully implemented and families begin seeing the comprehensive benefits they were promised, Wounded Warrior Project will hold President Obama accountable for the failure to honor his commitment to these military families.”

Under the new law, the VA is responsible for providing family caregivers of the most severely injured veterans with help in meeting some of their own basic needs – including training and technical support, respite care, counseling, health coverage, and modest financial support.

On December 8, 2010 President Obama approved the report “Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America's Commitment” and held a press conference last week, declaring his support and the support of his

entire Cabinet for specific measures to “enhance the well-being and psychological health of the military family.”

"Wounded Warrior Project is calling on the White House to cut the red tape, stand by their word and ensure these families will begin receiving the support services they so desperately need and deserve," Nardizzi stated. "We urge concerned Americans to take action."

On Monday, February 14<sup>th</sup> join us in an outreach movement to send a message to the White House:

- Tweet your demand for support for wounded warriors. Paste the following message into Twitter: *@whitehouse: Time is up, President Obama. Support family caregivers of wounded warriors now.* [#MilitaryMonday](http://tiny.cc/6vmjv)
- Donate your Facebook status to the effort for the day with our message or become a fan of our page and follow the updates on the issue. <http://facebook.com/wwpinc.fans>
- Contact the White House at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact> and share your outrage at the lack of support for our nation's heroes and their families.
- Visit [www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org) for additional ways to get involved and show your support.

#### **Available for Interviews:**

Steven Nardizzi, Executive Director, Wounded Warrior Project Family caregivers directly affected by the bill

#### **About Wounded Warrior Project**

The mission of the Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is to honor and empower wounded warriors. WWP's purpose is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. WWP is a national, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla. To get involved and learn more, visit [woundedwarriorproject.org](http://woundedwarriorproject.org).

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