

Mr. Speaker, just weeks ago an outraged Nation learned about the terrible conditions many of our wounded warriors had to endure as they recovered from battlefield injuries at Walter Reed Medical Center. We have all heard the sad stories of mold and rat droppings at Building 18.

Even worse, we have learned that these dilapidated conditions extend beyond Walter Reed to other military facilities and even veterans facilities where troops turned veterans face a long, complicated and confusing process to get the benefits and care they have earned. Conditions like these and miles of bureaucratic red tape rob our troops and veterans of what they deserve the most, dignity, respect and honor.

It is absolutely unacceptable, and I am proud that this Congress is taking action. Just last week, the House approved more than \$20 million to clean up the mess at Walter Reed. We approved more than \$550 million to get rid of the backlog of maintenance requests at veterans facilities. That is a good start.

Last month, I introduced the Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act for 2007, which was the first legislation introduced in this House to prevent another episode like that of Walter Reed from ever happening again.

I commend the House Armed Services Committee for putting forward this legislation, which also establishes guidelines for how returning soldiers should be treated and measures of accountability. All of our troops, and all of our veterans, are entitled to quality health care and should be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. These are great first steps, but we still have a long way to go to ensure our troops and veterans are treated properly. They have my commitment that we will continue to take care of them just as they have taken care of us.