

WASHINGTON – Two days after a group of Arizona veterans told U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell that military personnel returning from war oftentimes need more than two years to enroll in Department of Veterans' Affairs programs to treat war-related injuries and other health issues, Mitchell and the House voted to extend the window to five years.

The measure was included in House-Senate conference agreement of H.R. 1585, the Defense Authorization Act, which passed the House with a 370 to 49 vote.

“We’re hearing directly from those returning from Afghanistan and Iraq that the two-year time window isn’t working,” said Mitchell. “We have a responsibility to do everything we can to improve care for our veterans, and that includes making sure they have adequate time to have their post-battle needs assessed by doctors.”

On Monday, at a veterans’ roundtable hosted by Mitchell, local veterans “said many of the issues confronted by Iraq and Afghanistan veterans on the home front could be addressed by improving the method in which they’re introduced to VA services.” [Source: [East Valley Tribune](#), Dec. 11, 2007]

According to The East Valley Tribune, “They told Mitchell that veterans typically are allowed two years from the time they are discharged from active military service to enroll for certain VA services. However, they said, many combat veterans need to make a clean break from the military simply to readjust to civilian life. That period of adjustment sometimes is longer than two years.” [Source: [East Valley Tribune](#), Dec. 11, 2007]