



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 20, 2011

The Honorable John Carter
409 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Carter:

We the undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Veterans Task Force are writing in support of the Veterans Equal Treatment for Service Dogs Act (VETS Dogs Act) (H.R. 1154). This legislation would ensure that veterans with disabilities who use service dogs are able to have equal access to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities.

CCD is a coalition of national consumer, service provider, and professional organizations which advocates on behalf of people with disabilities and chronic conditions and their families.

The members of the CCD Veterans Task Force believe that VA must be a leader in access for people with disabilities because of their mission to serve our nation's veterans, particularly those who have disabilities as a result of their service. The VETS Dogs Act states that the VA Secretary may not prohibit the use of service dogs in VA facilities or on VA property.

Currently, 38 C.F.R. § 1.218(a)(11), which applies to "all property under the charge and control of VA," states that, "Dogs and other animals, except seeing-eye dogs, shall not be brought upon property except as authorized by the head of the facility or designee." Although the Veterans Health Administration issued a directive on March 10 that if properly implemented could address past access difficulties, we believe that the VETS Dogs Act is needed to ultimately ensure equal access to VA facilities for veterans with disabilities who use service dogs.

Thank you for your continuing leadership on behalf of our nation's veterans. CCD and its Veterans Task Force are willing to assist in any way to serve veterans with disabilities. If you have any questions, please contact Heather Ansley, CCD Veterans Task Force Co-Chair, at (202) 556-2076, ext. 7702 or by e-mail at hansley@vetsfirst.org.

Sincerely,

American Association on Health and Disability
American Physical Therapy Association
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Mental Health America
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors

National Counsel for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Disability Rights Network
National Industries for the Blind
National Rehabilitation Association
NISH
Paralyzed Veterans of America
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association
Vietnam Veterans of America