



For Immediate Release

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The National Black Caucus of State Legislators Supports the Veterans' Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act

Washington, DC - October 22, 2009 - NBCSL President, Rep. Calvin Smyre (GA), applauds the Obama Administration's efforts to improve health care for veterans. Today, President Barack Obama signed the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act, which provides one year of advance funding for veterans' medical programs. The VA now has one year to plan how to best allocate funds and deliver care to returning veterans.

NBCSL is committed to ensuring that the new law translates into fully-funded mental health services for local VA hospitals. Mental health is a top priority for NBCSL, and state legislators will now be able to earmark funding for mental health care services at local VA hospitals and clinics.

NBCSL will facilitate partnerships between local VA administration offices, churches, and advocacy groups so they can coordinate programs that help veterans.

Earlier this month, NBCSL held its 16th Annual Mental Health Conference in Indianapolis. The conference focused on finding solutions to the challenges veterans face when returning home from war, including mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, depression and reconnecting with families and communities.

NBCSL President Calvin Smyre (GA) further stated that veterans' health and wellness will be a major focus for NBCSL members. "Our country's veterans endure countless injuries and traumas. When they return home we must guarantee they'll have proper health care, and I encourage state legislators to focus on veterans and underserved communities," said Rep. Smyre.

NBCSL remains committed to increasing awareness of mental health issues affecting all our veterans, particularly those in the African American community. Its goals include engaging state legislators, health care professionals, community leaders and the public on solutions to improving the mental health of African Americans.

About the National Black Caucus of State Legislators

Founded in 1977, NBCSL consists of 646 state legislators, from 42 states, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia, committed to opening doors and educating its membership on important policy issues so they can be more effective advocates for their constituents. Annually, NBCSL holds symposia to highlight issues such as health disparities, housing inequality and broadband accessibility. NBCSL is actively engaged in the implementation of policies to protect and benefit all Americans. To learn more about NBCSL, visit www.nbcsl.org. **Contact:** Celina Fabrizio, GDK Associates LLC, 614-245-1113 or at celinafabrizio@gmail.com