

2007 and to \$300/\$600 in 2008. Enlisted retirees would see their Standard deductible rise to \$175/\$350 next October, remain there for two years and rise to \$200/400 in October 2008.

- Increases TRICARE Pharmacy program co-payments for medicines purchased from the retail network (affects all military retirees and dependents regardless of age).

I strongly oppose this proposal. It is inconceivable to me that the DOD would consider increasing the burden on military retirees, many of whom are veterans, while the nation is at war. In times like these, we must do all that we can to assure those who are currently serving or those who are considering serving in the armed forces that we will honor our commitments to them by providing benefits they've been promised. This policy sends absolutely the wrong signal to our men and women in uniform at the worst possible time. As President George Washington once cautioned, *"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive veterans of earlier wars and how they were treated and appreciated by this country."*

Although DOD states that it already has the authority to enact these TRICARE cost increases without a change in law, Dr. Winkenwerder reportedly stated that the proposal would likely be submitted to Congress as part of President Bush's Fiscal Year 2007 budget request. Presidents in the post WWII era have traditionally submitted their budget requests to Congress in early February.

If the TRICARE cost increases are included in the President's budget request, you may be assured that I will vote against. In addition, if the DOD attempts to implement these cost increases without Congressional approval, I will support legislation to prevent them from taking effect.

Again, thank you for sharing your thoughts on this important matter. If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



GENE TAYLOR
Member of Congress