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OFFICE OF THE  
NATIONAL COMMANDER

April 18, 2011

Honorable John Boehner, Speaker  
U. S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Speaker Boehner:

As the nation's largest veterans' service organization, The American Legion is deeply committed to ensuring the men and women who serve this nation in harm's way receive the care and compensation due to them when the consequences of that service include debilitating health effects. The long term effects of Gulf War deployment are to this day not fully understood in cause or treatment, yet service members continue to be afflicted with these conditions and continue to suffer the effects. Even now our service members continue to serve in the Gulf region, and VA has also recently expanded certain presumptions related to Gulf War service to servicemembers in Afghanistan.

Under the current law, the presumptions afforded Gulf War veterans in dealing with service connection for these health conditions that continue to defy medical diagnosis are set to expire December 31, 2011. The history of these presumptions recognizes how challenging doctors and scientists have found diagnosis for these health effects, and the problems they pose to a VA benefit system based on clear diagnosis. If these presumptions are allowed to expire, our current veterans as well as those who have served in the Gulf from the invasion of Kuwait to the present will be back to square one of a long and arduous journey to receive the benefits and most importantly the care to which they are entitled.

The American Legion urges Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to work together to extend these presumptions indefinitely in recognition of the reality that our service members are committed to operations in these dangerous regions for the foreseeable future, even when active combat operations have long ceased. We thank you for your cooperation in this matter and remain confident you will not let our veterans down.

Respectfully,

JIMMIE L. FOSTER  
National Commander

C: Minority Leader Pelosi