



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 23, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

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) (S. 769). 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](mailto: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 Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
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