

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Vern Buchanan (R-FL) announced today that he has been appointed by House leaders to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

"I look forward to working with Democrats and Republicans on the Committee to address the needs of my District's more than 95,000 veterans," said Buchanan. "As a member of Congress, one of my most important duties is to ensure that our Vets receive the health care and benefits they have earned."

Buchanan's regional priorities include fighting for an ambulatory surgery and specialty care clinic in Sarasota to provide comprehensive services to veterans who currently have to travel to Bay Pines to receive health care; providing additional staff to the regional Veterans Administration (VA) to more quickly process cases; and the completion of the Veterans' Cemetery in Sarasota. The former Air National Guardsman is also concerned about conditions at Walter Reed Medical Center.

"I am deeply troubled by the reports of substandard conditions and bureaucratic problems affecting the care of injured soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan," said Buchanan. "I am further concerned with the possibility that substandard conditions exist throughout the military healthcare system. I have written to the Acting Secretary of the Army, Peter Geren to express my concerns. In the coming weeks, I intend to work with my colleagues in Congress to ensure that this Walter Reed incident doesn't happen again. "

Buchanan's appointment was celebrated by Florida veterans.

"This is a great day for veterans," said Florida Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) legislative chair and national legislative committee member, retired Lt. Col. Lee Kichen of Sarasota. "As a former member of the National Guard, Congressman Buchanan brings valuable experience to the Committee. National Guard members and Reservists are playing a vital role in the War on Terror. It is good to have someone of the Congressman's background serving as an advocate for our newest generation of veterans."

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs has jurisdiction over the VA and its programs,

including veterans health care, disability compensation, GI bill education and job training, home loan guarantees, life insurance policies, and veterans cemeteries. The Committee conducts oversight of these programs, examines current laws, and promotes policies to better meet the needs of our nation's veterans.

Buchanan was appointed today by the Republican Steering Committee. The full House is expected to approve the appointment next week.