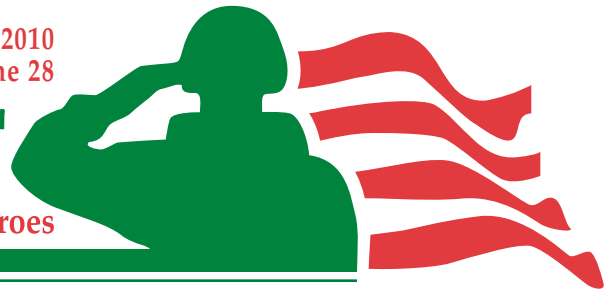


THE ROAD TO RECOVERY REPORT

September 2010
Volume 28



An Update for Supporters of the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes

Six-month wait for VA disability checks adds to wounded GI burdens as Christmas nears



The financial problems confronting America's severely wounded troops are being compounded by a bureaucratic breakdown that is forcing them to wait six months – or longer – for their VA disability checks.

One recent article in the *Military Times.com* reports the VA bureaucracy has a backlog of over 1 million claims – and an error rate of 17 to 25 percent.

The VA's chief technology officer, Peter Levin, is quoted as saying the system is broken so badly that, "In my judgment, it cannot be fixed."

In a recent letter to supporters, CSAH spokesman Jorge DeLeon called the massive government failure "an insult to my fellow troops who have lost an arm or leg, or have been brain-damaged, burned, blinded or paralyzed while serving in Afghanistan or Iraq."

DeLeon also pleaded for Coalition supporters to pitch in to help seriously injured GIs facing the loss of their homes, their cars and more.

The government's failure couldn't have come at a worse time: As the chart illustrates, the number of troops injured in Afghanistan or Iraq is skyrocketing over the same period last year. That means the number of wounded GIs in need of emergency aid is escalating as well.

"During the last Christmas Season, the Coalition was hard-pressed to fulfill the needs of all the Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen who pinned their last hope for saving their home or feeding their family on receiving aid from us," says Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub, U.S. Army (Ret.)

"Obviously our wounded heroes can't afford

to wait six months to feed their children, pay their rent and utility bills and put gas in the car, so we're facing a critical situation right now and up through the Christmas Season."

He pointed to wounded servicewoman Brenda M. as someone who will be especially vulnerable this Christmas because of the long wait for VA disability benefits.

Brenda was critically injured in Iraq during a mortar assault on the aircraft hangar where she was working. Her injuries caused her to lose her job, and she has been unemployed for over two years.

"I was about to be evicted, utilities were about to be disconnected and was days away from losing my vehicle," she says. Then she found the Coalition's website, and "they immediately

stepped in with the assistance I needed."

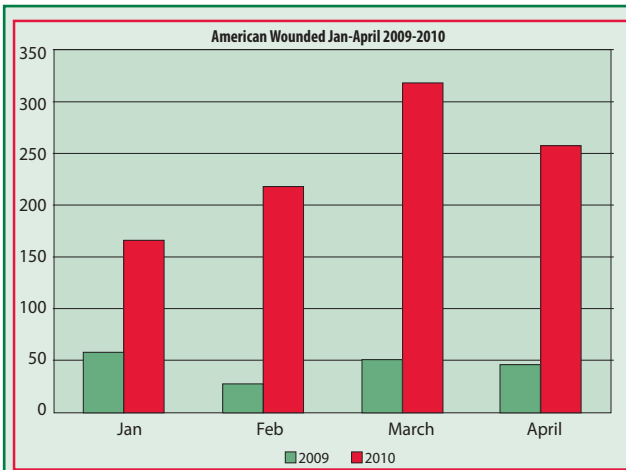
Today, Brenda still struggles to pay her electric bill, afford groceries and prevent her car from being repossessed.

"I had given up," she says. "But I regained trust because of organizations like the Coalition. I am so thankful there are organizations like the Coalition that give veterans relief from financial hardships."

Thanks to the generosity of supporters, the Coalition's Emergency Financial Aid Program is usually able to rush assistance to GIs like Brenda quickly – sometimes within days, Singlaub noted.

He added that Brenda's story shows how the Coalition represents much more than a financial lifeline for our disabled troops.

"It also renews their faith – and that's especially important during the Christmas Season." ■



The number of troops wounded in Afghanistan or Iraq has skyrocketed for the first few months of this year (shown in red) compared to last year. To help those who are unable to feed their families or face losing their homes and other disasters, the Coalition has launched a Christmas Emergency Aid Drive.

Providing
Emergency Aid
to Severely
Wounded Troops
and Their Families
in Crisis

KEY PROGRAMS:

Emergency
Financial Aid

Family Support
Network

Career Network

Road to Recovery
Conference & Tribute

INSIDE:

The Coalition at
Work.....2

In Their Own Words:
Thank you letters from
our severely wounded
troops.....3

Making a
Difference.....4

Providing Emergency Aid to Severely Wounded Troops and Their Families in Crisis

Coalition to Salute America's Heroes ★ PO Box 96440 ★ Washington, DC 20090-6440 ★ www.saluteheroesproject.org

By the numbers: Your generosity at work



Here's a brief sampling of severely wounded troops who have been helped by your generous donations to the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes. These and other U.S. servicemen and women have fallen into desperate circumstances and need more assistance than we've been able to provide thus far, so please send a special Christmas donation to help them and their families if you can.

- Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Robert K. of Montgomery, Alabama suffered a severe back injury while serving in Iraq. He needed \$1,621.23 to catch up on back rent.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,621.23**
- Army Staff Sgt. Adam S. could not get around due to \$2,096.15 in car repairs he could not pay.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,096.15**
- Army Specialist Robert R. was injured while serving in Iraq. He called the Coalition and needed \$2,296 to pay overdue rent.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,296.00**
- Marine Sgt. Christopher T. of Grand Rapids, Michigan was having trouble keeping up with his rent and utility payments after returning from Iraq with severe wounds. He needed \$1,819.48 to get back on his feet.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,819.48**
- Army Specialist William W. of Crossville, Tennessee returned from his tour of duty in Iraq with a severe injury. He needed \$1,086.42 for rent and utility bills.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,086.42**
- Johnny W., an Army Sergeant from Mansfield, Texas, lost a limb from wounds suffered while serving in Iraq. He was \$2,400 behind in his rent when he contacted the Coalition.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,400.00**
- Marine Lance Cpl. Thomas D. of Courtland, Virginia was drowning with overdue rent, utility and car payments. He needed \$1,354.30 to get all caught up.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,354.30**
- Army Specialist Bryan G. of Oak Hills, California called and let the Coalition know he needed \$2,500 to get caught up with all of his rent payments.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$2,500.00**
- Petty Officer 3rd Class Adam B. of Grand Junction, Colorado found himself \$939.13 behind in rent, utility and car payments.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$939.13**
- Senior Airman Charles I. of Columbus, Georgia had an unpaid medical bill along with overdue rent and utility payments. He needed \$1,939.95 right away to prevent eviction and get caught up with the rest of his bills.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,939.95**
- Injuries suffered by Army Specialist Ralph P. of McComb, Mississippi while serving in Iraq caused him to have rent, auto and utility bills pile up. He needed \$1,010.87 to stave off bill collectors.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,010.87**
- Wounded Iraq theater veteran Army Sgt. Stephen M. was facing foreclosure unless he could make an \$834.67 mortgage payment.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$834.67**
- Dealing with a severe back injury suffered while serving in Iraq, Army Sgt. Jeffrey H. of Round Rock, Texas had to come up with \$1,558.33 for a deposit and first month's rent on a new place to live.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,558.33**
- Marine Sgt. Joshua S. of Prescott, Arizona had to come up with \$1,800 in back rent to keep his place to live.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,800.00**
- Daniel M., a Marine Lance Cpl. from Dana Point, California, is recovering from a severe brain injury suffered while serving in Iraq. He needed \$1,794.11 for rent and car payments.
▶ **Coalition Paid: \$1,794.11**



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Thank you letters from our severely wounded troops



'God Bless You . . . Keep on Helping Others'

"The assistance has brightened our vision a whole lot more. We appreciated everything the Coalition has done for us. I just do not know how we would have made it without your help. Thank you very much!"

– *Clifford A. Jones, Toledo, Ohio*

"I was homeless with my wife and three boys. With the Coalition's help, we paid our way into an apartment. They were in contact with Aaron's Home Furnishings to get us furniture when we didn't have any. CSAH was there for me. Thank you."

– *Christopher Horman, Jacksonville, Florida*

"I want to take this opportunity to thank the Coalition for the financial help you've provided to my family. We are so thankful there is an organization that really and truly helps people (not just us) during hard and stressful times like ours. Thank you again for helping us and supporting the troops. God Bless You, the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes. Keep on helping others."

– *Walton Calhoun, Elberton, Georgia*

"I was recently laid off from my job and went several months without employment. I decided I needed to go back to school and start a new career as a pharmacy

technician. I have four months of school left and that is causing a real struggle. The Coalition made a mortgage payment for me and now my wife and I can get caught up on our finances. Truly a God Send."

– *Christopher C., Flatwoods, Kentucky*

"The only vehicle we had started to give us mechanical problems until one day it decided not to start. That was the only vehicle we had and for a few months we had to borrow rides to get the kids back and forth to the doctor and even had to visit the emergency room twice. CSAH really made the difference because the mechanic wouldn't even start without half of the funds needed to repair the vehicle. I'm very well blessed and couldn't say thank you enough."

– *Donald S., Hephzibah, Georgia*

Thank you so much Coalition for your support for my family and myself. It means a great deal for any help from people who care about the sacrifices we have made for the U.S. and how much families have to go through. Over there we were on our mission. It is nice to know someone is on a mission for us.

– *Benjamin F., Middleburg, Florida*

Some severely wounded troops remain in need even after receiving emergency aid

The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes provides emergency aid for severely wounded troops in desperate financial straits. Timely financial aid to prevent a foreclosure or pay for young families' groceries for a month can truly make a huge difference.

However, even after avoiding a financial calamity, many severely wounded troops continue to battle for financial survival.

- * Clifford A. Jones tells us he struggles every month to make his car payment, and it has become even more difficult since his wife lost her job.
- * Donald S. was elated that Coalition donors were able to help get his car back on the road. But he also tells us he can't spare the money to fix a leaking roof on his home.
- * Walton Calhoun is unable to work after getting injured during a mortar barrage. He tells us just trying to buy food and pay rent every month is a challenge.





Delay in receiving VA benefits leaves wounded Marine, pregnant wife scrambling to survive



Christopher Chaput was patrolling the terrorist hotbed of the Helman Valley in Afghanistan when the vehicle he was riding in came under heavy mortar fire.

One round exploded close by, and shrapnel from the blast ripped into his right shoulder, right knee and across his back.

Christopher's injuries were so bad he was airlifted to Germany for more extensive treatment. Despite the care, the shrapnel attack has left him with kidney failure, blood disease and a host of other medical problems.

The wounded hero medically retired from the Marine Corps in September of 2009. Ever since then, he told us, "It has been nothing but a fight to keep our heads above water."

"I was told I was unemployable, am on about 15 different medications and the VA and SSI take a very long time to process."

While waiting for his disability claims to get processed, the Chaputs were evicted from their home, had vehicles repossessed, sold almost all of their belongings and "were lucky if we ate once a day."

Now, looking at a second eviction notice, Christopher's wife Kimberly relayed some exciting news: She was expecting their first child.

It was at this point that Christopher and Kimberly were put in touch with the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes.

"They were friendly and extended a much needed hand," he reported.

The Coalition got the Chaput family caught up on back rent to prevent a second eviction, paid an overdue electric bill, a car payment and gave the Chaputs money for meals.

As Christopher recalls, "It truly could not have come at a better time, and we are so blessed to have been helped. My wife and I can't express our sincere gratitude to the Coalition and all those who kindly donated to help

families like ours."

Retired Major General John K. Singlaub, national spokesman for the Coalition, says, "For every Christopher and Kimberly Chaput we are able to help, I am afraid there are hundreds more who are nearing the end of their rope and are desperate for a grateful nation to rise up and remember all they sacrificed."

One reason is the surge in the number of wounded troops returning from combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, Singlaub noted. Compounding the problem is the VA disability claims process is taxed to the limit.

The result is more and more seriously injured troops will be facing eviction and hunger, just like the Chaput family, before they receive the benefits they have earned.

"Coalition donors should feel very good they were able to help this fine young family recover from the devastating impact of a severe war wound and the financial catastrophe it caused," said Singlaub.

"I hope the Coalition will be able to help thousands of other families in similar situations who will cry out for our help this Christmas Season." ■



Marine Christopher Chaput suffered severe injuries while on patrol in Afghanistan. While awaiting his VA disability check, he and wife Kimberly were evicted from their home and had their car repossessed. A few months later, with Kimberly pregnant, they were facing another eviction when Coalition donors came to their aid.