

## Mahoney Cosponsors Bill to Freeze VA Bonuses until Case Backlog is Significantly Reduced

(May 10th, 2007)

(Washington, DC) - Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) today cosponsored legislation to freeze Fiscal Year 2007 bonuses for senior political appointees at the Department of Veterans Affairs, until the backlog of pending disability claims is reduced from the 600,000 now estimated to fewer than 100,000.

"Improving veterans' health and wellbeing should be the number one priority of the VA. With an additional 800,000 disability claims estimated to come in this year, it is imperative that the flaws in the system be fixed. We cannot afford to reward poor performance when the brave men and women who served our country continue to wait for help. Since Congress has consistently provided the VA with funding in excess of what it requested, we must hold the President's political appointees accountable for their performance," Congressman Tim Mahoney.

The Associated Press recently reported that the Department of Veterans Affairs awarded more than \$3.8 million in bonuses in 2006, even as the VA faced a \$1 billion shortfall that endangered veterans' healthcare services. Bonuses for Veterans Affairs employees averaged \$16,000 last year, the highest in the federal government.

Among those receiving bonuses as high as \$33,000 were senior employees responsible for the VA's flawed 2005 budget that led to massive shortfalls at the department.

Also receiving a top bonus of \$33,000 was the deputy undersecretary for benefits, who helps manage a disability claims system that has a backlog of 600,000 cases and delays averaging 177 days in getting benefits to injured veterans.

-###-