

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 10, 2007

The Honorable Preston M. Geren, III
Secretary of the Army
Office of the Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary Geren:

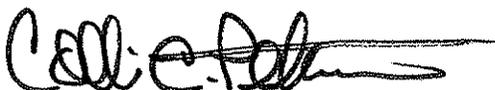
We are deeply concerned that the soldiers of the 1/34th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) of the Minnesota National Guard are not all able to receive Active Component GI Bill benefits and seem to lack a coherent set of orders. These soldiers have recently returned home from a 22 month mobilization, including a 16 month deployment to Iraq. Their tour, which was extended due to the President's surge strategy, was the longest of any ground combat unit during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Nearly half of the unit's 2,600 Minnesotan soldiers either qualify or nearly qualify for the Active Component GI Bill entitlements. These soldiers meet the 22-month deployment and MOS requirements. However, 1,162 of the unit's soldiers fall just a few days short of the 730 day requirement. We feel the issue arose when the units had their orders amended due to the extension. Different elements of the same unit had different numbers of days listed on their orders - some orders were for 730 days and some were not - even though they were all deployed together.

It is our hope that you can reissue a new set of orders to those soldiers who do not meet the 730 day requirement. We are confident that this particular issue can be resolved through action by your office, and that all members of the 1/34th BCT can be made eligible for the full active component educational benefits.

We urge you to address this matter in a timely fashion, and to take action to ensure that Guard and Reserve members returning home from extended deployments in Iraq receive all the benefits to which they are entitled. Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress



Tim Walz
Member of Congress



Jim Oberstar
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Michelle Bachman
Member of Congress