



PRESS RELEASE

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Congressional Briefing on the Value of Rehabilitation and Habilitation in America's Healthcare System

Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA) to Share the Impact of Rehabilitation on their Lives

Washington D.C. – Sixty national rehabilitation and disability organizations – and a bipartisan group of speakers – advocated today to protect coverage of critical services for people with injuries, disabilities and other health conditions. A Congressional Briefing, “The Value of Rehabilitation and Habilitation Services and Devices in America’s Healthcare System,” demonstrated the impact that rehabilitation and habilitation services and devices can have on individuals’ lives.

The public event was held from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. on June 27 in Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room SD-106. As Congress considers health care reform, this briefing was a bipartisan, bicameral event intended to underscore the importance of access to—and coverage of—these important services and devices.

Featured speakers at the Congressional Briefing included:

- ***U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)***

Sen. Duckworth is an Iraq War Veteran, Purple Heart recipient and former Assistant Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. On Nov. 12, 2004, while deployed to Iraq as a helicopter pilot, her helicopter was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade, which resulted in the loss of her legs and partial use of her right arm.

- ***U.S. Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA)***

Congressman Thompson practiced as a rehabilitation therapist prior to coming to Congress and understands the wide variety of rehabilitation services provided in multiple settings. Cong. Thompson has personal experience providing therapy services to injured veterans, Medicare beneficiaries, and privately insured individuals. He understands the value that these services bring to the U.S. health care system.

- ***Eric LeGrand*** (former Rutgers University football star with spinal cord injury)

LeGrand played defensive tackle at Rutgers University in 2010, where he experienced a severe spinal cord injury from a collision during a game. He has since become an advocate for individuals that are affected by spinal cord injuries and disorders. In 2013, LeGrand formed Team LeGrand of the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation. The proceeds from Team LeGrand fund research to finding a cure for paralysis and for improving the quality of life for people with spinal cord injuries.

- ***Roseann Sdoia*** (Boston Marathon bombing survivor)

Sdoia lost her right leg as a result of the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombing attack. She is now a motivational speaker and advocates for those needing prosthetic limbs.

- ***Lisa Smith*** (mother of Isabela Smith, recipient of habilitation therapies)

Smith will discuss the value of the speech language pathology services and occupational therapy her daughter received throughout her childhood, the value of these habilitation services and the status of her daughter's life today.

These testimonials of injury, rehabilitation and recovery spoke directly to the importance of comprehensive services, including the following:

- Intensive inpatient rehabilitation hospital care
- Outpatient rehabilitation therapies
- Habilitation services and devices, particularly for children
- Prosthetic limbs and orthotic braces
- Complex rehabilitation technology wheelchairs
- Rehabilitation's impact on injured military personnel and veterans

“Trumpcare would be devastating for our nation - especially for Americans living with a disability, a pre-existing condition or who are in need of rehabilitative services,” said Sen. Duckworth, a co-host of the briefing. “It would give insurance companies a chance to stop covering essential benefits like rehabilitative care, while also gutting a program that millions of Veterans, amputees, and people with disabilities rely on for their health care—that’s unacceptable.”

“As a former rehabilitation therapist myself, I have seen incredible strides that people with injuries and disabilities can make with access to appropriate rehabilitation, habilitation, and assistive devices and technologies that improve functional abilities,” stated Rep. Glenn Thompson. “My fellow speakers today are living examples of the value of this care in America’s health care system.”

The briefing also highlighted cutting-edge assistive devices and technologies through informal consumer demonstrations, including Otto Bock's BeBionic prosthetic arm, Ossur's POWER Knee, complex rehab technology (CRT) wheelchairs, the EksoGT™ wearable exoskeleton to assist those with spinal cord injury and stroke, a cochlear implant to address hearing loss and a speech generation device (SGD).

“We stand at an important crossroads in our debate on the future of healthcare in this country,” LeGrand said. “What is most important is to preserve access to rehabilitation and habilitation benefits so that people can get coverage for the services and devices they need to function independently at home and within their community after having sustained injuries or if they have a disability or chronic condition.”

“I know the value of rehabilitation first-hand,” Sdoia said. “The need for this care knows no political boundaries. Very few expect they will need rehabilitation, but when they do, like me, it is critical they have access to these services and devices.”

The [ITEM Coalition](#) is a consumer and clinician-led coalition of more than 75 national organizations advocating for access to and coverage of assistive devices, technologies and related services for persons with injuries, illnesses, disabilities and chronic conditions of all ages. The [HAB Coalition](#) is a group of 42 national organizations who are active in their support for habilitative services and devices. The [Coalition to Preserve Rehabilitation](#) (CPR) is a coalition of 48 national consumer, clinician and membership organizations with the goal of preserving and improving access to inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation services.

Please contact Steve Postal for more information about the briefing at 202-349-4243 or at steve.postal@powerslaw.com.

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