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FOR RELEASE:

February 26, 2009

Assemblywoman Tucker

(973) 926-4320

CONTACT:

Assemblywoman Cruz-Perez

(856) 541-1251

Assemblyman Scalera

(973) 667-4431

Chairman Conners

(856) 461-3997

ASSEMBLY PANEL CLEARS CRUZ- PEREZ/SCALERA/CONNERS/TUCKER MEASURES TO ENHANCE HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS

(TRENTON) – The Assembly Military and Veterans’ Affairs Committee today released two measures calling for improved health care for veterans that are sponsored by Assembly members Nilsa Cruz-Perez, Fred Scalera, Jack Conners and Cleopatra Tucker.

The first resolution (AR-148) sponsored by Cruz-Perez (D-Camden), Scalera (D-Essex/Union/Passaic) and Conners (D-Camden) seeks enhanced and expanded health care for women veterans.

The measure would urge the U.S. Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs to assess barriers faced by women veterans trying to access to health care. It also asks the secretary to ensure appropriate training and certification for the mental health professionals who care for women veterans.

“By 2010, women are expected to make-up over 14 percent of the total U.S. veteran population, according to federal department of Veterans’ Affairs,” said Cruz-Perez. “Every veteran deserves the best health care available after risking their safety and lives to protect our country. And women veterans deserve adequate health care and this means access to medical care that meets their unique gender needs.”

“Women are the fastest growing group among veterans,” said Scalera. “We must ensure that women veterans have tailored health services from their primary care to reproductive services to mental health and treatment for military sexual trauma.”

(MORE)

The second resolution (AR-173) sponsored by Conners and Tucker (D-Essex) would memorialize Congress and the President to pass the federal (H.R. 1016) “Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act.” The “Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009” was introduced on February 12, 2009 in response to insufficient, late and unpredictable health care for veterans enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system.

“Access to health care was a promise made to every veteran when they enlisted in military service,” said Conners. “It is unconscionable that veterans enrolled in the federal health care system have been subjected to insufficient, untimely and unpredictable medical care. We must guarantee that the brave men and women who have served our country are able to access the best available health care anywhere, all of the time.”

“The men and women who have donned a U.S. military uniform should not be expected to fight a battle for their basic right to health care,” said Tucker. “Ensuring quality medical care for veterans is the least we can do to thank the service men and women who have sacrificed their lives to protect the freedoms of this country.”

The measures were released 5 to 0 and 5 to 0 respectively. The resolutions now head to the Assembly Speaker who may decide if and when to post them for a vote.

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