



a program of United Spinal Association

March 16, 2011

The Honorable John Carter
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Carter:

As a national veterans service organization, United Spinal Association and its veterans service program, VetsFirst, strongly support the Veterans Equal Treatment for Service Dogs Act (VETS Dogs Act). This legislation would ensure that all people using service dogs, including veterans with disabilities, are able to access U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities.

Currently, 38 C.F.R. § 1.218(a)(11), which applies to "all property under the charge and control of VA," states that, "Dogs and other animals, except seeing-eye dogs, shall not be brought upon property except as authorized by the head of the facility or designee." Recently, some veterans with disabilities have had difficulty accessing VA medical facilities when accompanied by their service dogs.

The VETS Dogs Act states that the VA Secretary may not prohibit the use of service dogs in VA facilities or on VA property. VetsFirst acknowledges that the Veterans Health Administration recently issued a directive that if properly implemented could address past access difficulties. We believe, however, that the VETS Dogs Act is needed to ultimately ensure equal access to VA facilities for veterans with disabilities using service dogs.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and urge swift passage of the VETS Dogs Act to ensure access to VA services for veterans with disabilities who use service dogs. If you have any questions, please contact Heather Ansley, Director of Veterans Policy, at (202) 556-2076, ext. 7702 or by e-mail at hansley@vetsfirst.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather L. Ansley".

Heather L. Ansley, Esq., MSW
Director of Veterans Policy
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association

