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For God and Country

September 27, 2007

Honorable Tom Coburn  
United States Senate  
SR-172 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-1204

Dear Senator Coburn:

The American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans' service organization, strongly opposes specific provisions of H.R. 2640, the NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007. Specifically, we oppose any provisions that would unilaterally abrogate the rights of certain service-connected disabled veterans to own firearms, a right guaranteed by the Second Amendment.

This bill would statutorily require the Department of Veterans Affairs to identify and submit the names of nearly 83,000 veterans who have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to the Department of Justice for their inclusion on the National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Further, it would require veterans to have to prove why they, as law-abiding citizens and veterans, should have the right to own or bear arms. PTSD is a diagnosable and treatable medical condition, which should not be stigmatized by such onerous provisions. PTSD is stress disorder not a crime, nor is it limited to veterans.

We fully understand the laudable goal of this legislation in keeping guns out of the hands of people with severe mental disorders by improving the Department of Justice "NICS" list; however, it would have the potential unintended consequence of denying gun rights to any veteran, especially wartime veterans, without the benefit of due process in a court of law.

Thank you for considering our opposition to those provisions present in this bill. We believe that simple modifications to the language would ensure that we don't compromise the rights of our veterans who have served our country so honorably, and we look forward to participating in the process of carefully crafting that legislative language.

Sincerely,

Steve Robertson, Director  
National Legislative Commission