

Concerned members of the U.S. House of Representatives address the current state of tinnitus treatments and research.

Invisible Wounds Caucus Hears About Tinnitus

JENNIFER BORN, ATA DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

This Sept. 22, 2010, the subject of tinnitus had the attentive ear of the Invisible Wounds Caucus (IWC), a newly formed group in the U.S. House of Representatives. "The Number One Service-Connected Disability" hearing addressed tinnitus as its sole issue. The hearing set out to address the state of tinnitus treatment and research and to examine the demonstrated connections between tinnitus and both Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Rep. Harry Teague (D-NM-2), one of ATA's 2009 Congressional Champions, chaired the hearing along with Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN-1). A panel of expert witnesses testified on behalf of millions of tinnitus sufferers. Their particular focus was on military personnel and veterans, both disproportionately impacted by tinnitus compared with the civilian population.

Each witness brought their own knowledge and authority to the hearing through their remarks. Panel members included:

- Lucille Beck, Ph.D., Chief Consultant for Rehabilitation Services and National Program Director for Audiology and Speech Services, Office of Patient Care Services in the Veterans Health Administration for the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Richard Salvi, Ph.D., former chair of ATA's Scientific Advisory Committee and Director for the Center for Hearing and Deafness at the State University of New York at Buffalo



Reps. Phil Roe and Harry Teague, co-chairs, Invisible Wounds Caucus; Richard Salvi, Ph.D.

- Michael J. O'Rourke, ATA board member and Assistant Director for Veterans Health Policy for the Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Raymond C. Kelley, Iraq War veteran and National Legislative Director for the Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Jennifer Born, ATA Director of Public Affairs

During the past five years, ATA has worked steadily on its advocacy efforts to increase federal funding for tinnitus research. This hearing is another promising avenue to help keep tinnitus in the limelight when it comes to decision making in Washington, D.C. In addition to the witnesses and co-chairs of the IWC, in attendance were congressional staff, including a representative from Speaker Pelosi's office, veterans and military service organization representatives.

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Tinnitus is a serious problem that not only doesn't have a cure, but also hasn't been getting the attention it truly deserves.

~ Rep. Harry Teague

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ATA is hopeful that with continued advocacy efforts – including grassroots participation by our members – we will keep the issue of tinnitus before relevant caucuses and standing committees. All of these pieces of the puzzle contribute to increasing tinnitus research funding and the ultimate goal of silencing tinnitus for everyone. ATA thanks Reps. Teague and Roe and all the members of the Invisible Wounds Caucus for shedding light on the number one

service-connected disability for hundreds of thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Join the Action

To learn more about and join ATA's advocacy efforts visit: www.ata.org/advocacy/successes. Download our advocacy toolkit at: www.ata.org/advocacy/tool-kit and send copies to your own senators and representatives. ☺☺☺



Four panel members: Jennifer Born; Raymond Kelly, National Legislative Director, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Michael O'Rourke, ATA Board Member; Richard Salvi, Ph.D.



Nathan Howard, Military Legislative Fellow for Rep. Harry Teague; Lucille Beck, Ph.D., Jennifer Born; Carlos Alford, Military Legislative Fellow for Rep. Mike McMahon.