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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 15, 2011

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Chris Sainato, Democratic Chairman
Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee

SUBJECT: Co-Sponsorship of Legislation: Allowing PTSD to be considered by
judges when determining a criminal sentence

In the near future, I plan on introducing legislation that would allow post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly referred to as PTSD, to be considered by judges when determining a criminal sentence.

Pennsylvania has one of the largest veteran populations in the country with more than one million veterans residing in the Commonwealth, about a fifth of whom likely suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or depression, with an equal number who suffer from traumatic brain injury. Unfortunately, many of our veterans tend to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol and end up involved in the criminal justice system. This is a sad situation, and unfortunately one that is happening far too often.

For counties that do not have veteran's courts, which are designed to assist the former service member by providing a treatment program that will help them on their path toward recovery, this will serve as a tool judges can use to assist these individuals in recovery by permitting a diagnosis of PTSD to be considered specifically in any sentencing where applicable.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this important legislation, please call Harry Bucher in my office at 787-3557, or e-mail at hbucher@pahouse.net.