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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Special court opens to help veterans

As the top Democrat on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, I was pleased to read "New court provides hand out to veterans" (SignOn San Diego, Feb. 6).

This is a great start to a program we've been working on for a long time, but it is only the first step. It is critical that we expand the San Diego County veterans court to handle all of San Diego's veterans who need treatment, not incarceration. After Vietnam, over 11 percent of our combat veterans were convicted of felony offenses and 34 percent incurred misdemeanor convictions. Only now are we beginning to understand that a major

contributing factor to these numbers is the occurrence of combat- and deployment-related injuries like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Through extensive research and government investment, we have vastly improved the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD and TBI, and better know how these conditions affect behavior. It is now up to us to ensure that our brave men and women who return home from war suffering with these conditions can end up in treatment instead of prison.

Bob Filner

Congressman
California's 51st District
San Diego