

I rise today to commemorate Brain Awareness Week supported by the Society for Neuroscience and nearly 2,400 other organizations, by highlighting a serious brain condition that affects a large number of our men and women in uniform: Traumatic Brain Injury, TBI.

Each year, up to 30,000 of our combat soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan and an estimated 1.5 million Americans sustain a traumatic brain injury. Some patients are fortunate and heal with few long-term symptoms. Other patients suffer significant disabilities for the rest of their lives, while others pass away as a result of their brain injury. In New Jersey, there are approximately 9,000 traumatic brain injuries a year, ten percent of which prove fatal.

Research is needed to understand why some patients recover while others face long-term health issues from brain trauma. One of the key reasons for this is from secondary conditions that occur after the initial injury, such as insufficient blood flow to the brain, insufficient blood oxygen, or brain swelling. We must invest in more research to learn how to halt or prevent these secondary conditions to help more patients recover.

There is no standard treatment for traumatic brain injury. Neuroscience research has contributed significantly in discovering new medical treatments for TBI patients. For instance, this month the Pentagon announced a new military policy where soldiers who have experienced

a vehicle or roadside blast would be pulled from the war zone, evaluated for 24 hours, and checked for mild traumatic brain injury. This policy change was the result of research that showed that immediately examining and treating our troops reduces the chances of negative effects of serious head injuries.

As a member of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, I believe we must continue to invest in innovative research to understand and treat brain injury in order to ensure a better quality of life for our soldiers and citizens struggling with this condition. For this reason, along with many others, I ask my colleagues to support a strong research investment in this year's budget, which will improve treatments for brain injury and other health conditions while laying the groundwork for our future economic growth.