

# HEALTH

## Prison guards give time to blinded colleague

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**ALBANY, New York (AP) – Shrapnel took away Christopher Paiser's eyesight in Iraq a year ago, and it also took away his career as a corrections officer.**

But fellow prison guards and local politicians wanted to make sure Paiser's injury while serving in the Army National Guard wouldn't rob him of his future.

When Paiser, 35, returned from Iraq last year, blinded by shrapnel from a June 16 attack on an American military camp 50 miles north of Baghdad, he had not yet reached the 10 years of service as a prison guard that would allow him to leave with disability retirement benefits.

So fellow guards pitched in.

After Paiser used up his own sick days, his colleagues donated theirs – "Enough to get him through," says Michael Allard, the superintendent of the Franklin Correctional facility where Paiser worked.

Colleagues gave more than 300 sick days in all.

And state leaders have stepped in, introducing a bill to give Paiser his 10-year benefits immediately. With just days left in the legislative session, the bill has advanced to third reading in the Senate but remains in committee in the Assembly.

Paiser said he hopes the bill passes – for the sake of his colleagues as well as his own.

"They've earned their own time," Paiser



**Corrections officer Christopher Paiser, shown with his wife Mary, was blinded while serving in the Army National Guard in Iraq.**

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said. "I feel bad to be using their time."

He still takes pride in his career as a guard. He was nervous about sitting for an interview Thursday before receiving a Medal of Honor from the state Department of Correctional Services – worried he'd wrinkle his dress pants.

But he feels bad about being out of the action for the military; he officially left the Reserves last month.

"He's going to miss the military," his mother, Nancy Paiser, said before Thursday's ceremony. His trip to Iraq had been Paiser's first deployment overseas.

There won't be much time to mourn the past. Paiser is preparing to leave his Chazy Lake home again for four weeks at a Veterans Administration hospital for blind mobility training.

And his family said he's already begun thinking of himself in another line of work.

"He thinks he's a carpenter," Paiser's mother said. Paiser and his wife are renovating their home for themselves and their four children, and fellow prison guards have pitched in to help that effort, too.

Paiser helps as well – hammering nails.

"There's a stage where you don't want help from anybody," he said, admitting it takes time to adjust to his injury.

"Screws work a lot better," he said with a smile.

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