

May 7, 2018

The Honorable Phil Roe, Chairman
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Walz, Ranking Member
House Veterans' Affairs Committee
333 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Johnny Isakson, Chairman
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
418 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester, Ranking Member
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
825A Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roe, Ranking Member Walz, Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Tester:

On behalf of the millions of veterans, service members and family members we represent and advocate for, we offer our strong support for the "VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018," also known as the "VA MISSION Act of 2018." This historic veterans legislation would consolidate and reform VA's community care programs; extend funding for the current Veterans Choice Program for one year; strengthen VA's ability to recruit, hire and retain quality medical personnel; review, realign and modernize VA's health care infrastructure; and extend eligibility to VA's comprehensive caregiver assistance program to aging and disabled veterans injured before September 11, 2001.

Our organizations strongly support expanding eligibility for VA's comprehensive caregiver program to all generations of seriously disabled veterans, while maintaining the caregiver benefits that are currently available. Today, this program provides full comprehensive caregiver assistance only to veterans injured on or after September 11, 2001, leaving family caregivers and veterans injured during World War II, the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf Wars ineligible for this critical support. The legislation will help to correct this injustice and we – along with millions of members in our organizations – applaud you for taking this action and look forward to working in the future to ensure that both injured and ill veterans from all eras are eligible for this benefit.

The legislation would consolidate VA's community care programs and develop integrated networks of VA and community providers to supplement, not supplant VA health care, so that all enrolled veterans have timely access to quality medical care. The bill includes funding to continue the current Choice Program for an additional year until the new community care program is implemented as well as important workforce improvement provisions to strengthen VA's internal capacity to delivery care. This carefully crafted compromise represents a balanced approach to ensuring timely access to care while continuing to strengthen the VA health care system that millions of veterans choose and rely on.

The legislation also includes a new Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) process intended to design and implement a comprehensive plan to optimize and modernize VA's medical care facilities. The AIR process would provide meaningful stakeholder involvement, transparency and other safeguards during the review process to help ensure the final result leads to a stronger and better aligned VA infrastructure able to deliver care to veterans when and where they need it.

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Since the access and waiting list crisis exploded in 2014, Congress, VA and veterans leaders have debated how best to strengthen and reform the delivery of veterans health care to ensure timely and seamless access for enrolled veterans. The legislation before the Committee would take a major step towards that goal by making improvements to and investments in the VA health care system, creating integrated networks so that veterans have access to care when and where they need it, and providing the further recognition and assistance to family caregivers of severely disabled veterans deserve.

As leaders of the nation's veterans and military service organizations, we thank you for your steadfast leadership in crafting this important bipartisan bill and call on all members of Congress to seize this historic opportunity to improve the lives of veterans, their families and caregivers by swiftly passing the "VA MISSION Act of 2018." The men and women who have served, are serving and will serve in the future are counting on Congress' support.

Respectfully,



Garry J. Augustine
Washington Executive Director
DAV (Disabled American Veterans)



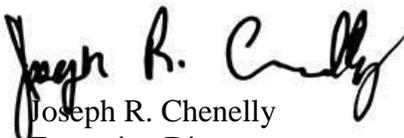
Robert E. Wallace
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Veterans of Foreign Wars
of the United States



Verna L. Jones
Executive Director
The American Legion



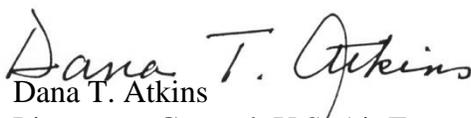
Carl Blake
Executive Director
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Joseph R. Chenelly
Executive Director
AMVETS



Rick Weidman
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Vietnam Veterans of America



Dana T. Atkins
Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
President
Military Officers Association of America



René Bardof
Senior Vice President
Government & Community Relations
Wounded Warrior Project

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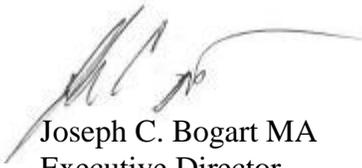
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Paul Rieckhoff
Founder and CEO
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America



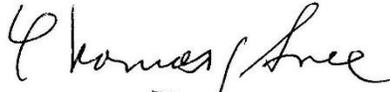
Neil Van Ess
National Commander
Military Order of the Purple Heart



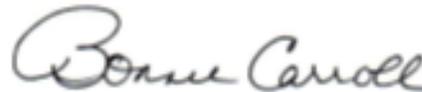
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Steve Schwab
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Elizabeth Dole Foundation



Thomas J. Snee
National Executive Director
Fleet Reserve Association



Bonnie Carroll
President and Founder
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors



Kristina Kaufmann
Executive Director
Code of Support Foundation



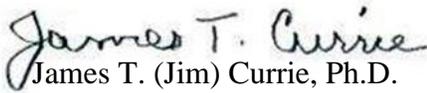
Jon Ostrowski
Senior Chief, USCGR, Retired
Director, Government Affairs
Non Commissioned Officers Association



Paul K. Hopper
Colonel, USMC (Ret.)
National President
Marine Corps Reserve Association



Michael Cowan MD, VADM USN (Ret)
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AMSUS



James T. (Jim) Currie, Ph.D.
Colonel, USA (Ret.)
Executive Director
Commissioned Officers Association
of the U.S. Public Health Service



Randy Reid
Executive Director
U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers
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Deirdre Park Holleman, Esq.
Washington Executive Director
The Retired Enlisted Association

CW4 (Ret.) Jack Du Teil
Executive Director
United States Army Warrant Officers
Association

John H. Madigan, Jr.
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American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Jim Lorraine
President/CEO
America's Warrior Partnership

Air Force Association

Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Air Force Sergeants Association

Marine Corps League

Air Force Women Officers
Associated

The Military Chaplains Assn. of the USA

Army Aviation Association of America

National Guard Assn. of the US

Association of the United States Navy

National Military Family Association

Enlisted Association of the National
Guard of the US

Naval Enlisted Reserve Assn.

Gold Star Wives of America

Reserve Officers Association

Service Women's Action Network

Alphabetical List of Letter Signers

1. Air Force Association (AFA)
2. Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
3. Air Force Women Officers Associated (AFWOA)
4. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
5. America's Warrior Partnership
6. The American Legion
7. AMSUS, The Society of Federal Health Professionals
8. AMVETS (American Veterans)
9. Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA)
10. Association of the US Navy (AUSN)
11. Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
12. Code of Support Foundation (COSF)
13. Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Services Inc (COA)
14. DAV (Disabled American Veterans)
15. Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF)
16. Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the US (EANGUS)
17. Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
18. Gold Star Wives of America (GSW)
19. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)
20. Jewish War Veterans (JWV)
21. Marine Corps League (MCL)
22. Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA)
23. Military Chaplains Association (MCA)
24. Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
25. Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
26. National Military Family Association (NMFA)
27. Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
28. Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA)
29. Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
30. Reserve Officers Association (ROA)
31. Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
32. The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)
33. Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
34. US Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)
35. USCG Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA)
36. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
37. Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)
38. Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)