

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. _____

Honoring and commending the 80th anniversary of the Blinded Veterans Association.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. MORAN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOZMAN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. WARNOCK, and Mr. CORNYN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on

RESOLUTION

Honoring and commending the 80th anniversary of the Blinded Veterans Association.

Whereas the Blinded Veterans Association (in this preamble referred to as “BVA”) was founded in 1945 by World War II veterans who were blinded in service to the United States, with the goal of providing support and advocacy for veterans who had lost their sight;

Whereas BVA is congressionally chartered as the official advocate and representative for all blinded veterans before the executive and legislative branches of the Federal Government;

Whereas, since its inception, BVA has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure that blind and low-vision veterans re-

ceive the services, recognition, and respect they deserve, advocating for improved access to health care, rehabilitation, and employment opportunities;

Whereas, over the past 80 years, BVA has continuously worked to advance the rights and welfare of blind and low-vision veterans by working alongside Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other governmental agencies, advocating for critical legislative and policy changes and providing a strong voice for those who have served in uniform;

Whereas the first comprehensive residential Blind Rehabilitation Center program opened on July 4, 1948, in Hines, Illinois, and operates still at the Edward Hines, Jr., Veterans Administration Hospital as one of 13 comprehensive residential Blind Rehabilitation Centers across the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system;

Whereas the Blind Rehabilitation Centers offer a variety of skill courses designed to help blind and low-vision veterans achieve greater levels of independence through skill areas including orientation and mobility, computer access training, communication skills, manual skills, and visual skills, as well as social and recreational activities;

Whereas BVA has played a key role in fostering a better understanding of the challenges faced by blind and low-vision veterans, while also contributing to the development and implementation of programs designed to improve the quality of life of blind and low-vision veterans, including the Visual Impairment Service Team Program, which is responsible for the coordination of services for severely disabled visually impaired veterans;

Whereas, through BVA's tireless advocacy efforts, major strides have been made in improving the care and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs for blind and low-vision veterans, such as enhanced access to outpatient blind rehabilitation services that allow those veterans to live independently and with dignity;

Whereas the Blind Rehabilitation Services of the Department of Veterans Affairs work to rehabilitate veterans by focusing on five core areas of living skills, orientation and mobility, visual skills, manual skills, and technology access;

Whereas BVA has championed efforts to expand benefits and services available to blind and low-vision veterans, including improving the disability rating schedule as it relates to visual impairment and blindness, the specially adapted housing grant, provision of guide dog benefits, and cutting-edge adaptive vision technology;

Whereas BVA has played a crucial role in advocating for policies that ensure safe and accessible environments for veterans who use guide dogs, promoting the safe access of guide dogs in public spaces, facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other areas inherent to the well-being and independence of veterans with visual impairments;

Whereas the Department of Veterans Affairs has made significant improvements to its care for blind and low-vision veterans, ensuring that programs such as the Blind Rehabilitation Centers continue to evolve to meet the needs of an aging veteran population, offering specialized training and services to help those veterans adapt to their vision loss;

Whereas there is still work to be done in ensuring that blind and low-vision veterans have consistent and equitable access to health care and benefits, mobility services, and job training opportunities, as well as the safety and accessibility of guide dogs in public spaces;

Whereas the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and telehealth technologies presents both opportunities and challenges for the rehabilitation and accessibility of blind and low-vision veterans, requiring ongoing evaluation and adaptation of programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas rural veterans often face unique challenges in accessing specialized rehabilitation and support services for visual impairments, necessitating targeted outreach and telehealth solutions;

Whereas the increasing prevalence of age-related macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions among veterans requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to prioritize research and development of innovative treatments and rehabilitative strategies;

Whereas the growing number of aging veterans with multiple comorbidities necessitates integrated care models that address both visual impairments and other health conditions; and

Whereas the needs of female blinded veterans are unique and require specific attention, including specialized prosthetics and mental health support: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) honors and commends the Blinded Veterans

3 Association for its 80 years of dedicated service, ad-

1 vocacy, and support for blind and low-vision vet-
2 erans;

3 (2) acknowledges the successes of the Blinded
4 Veterans Association in improving the lives of vet-
5 erans with visual impairments and expresses grati-
6 tude for its advocacy efforts on behalf of the entire
7 veterans community;

8 (3) urges the Department of Veterans Affairs
9 to guarantee safe access for guide dogs and guide
10 dog users at Department facilities, and calls upon
11 the Department to ensure that each medical center
12 of the Department has a trained and capable Service
13 Dog Champion on site;

14 (4) commends the Blinded Veterans Association
15 for its continued charitable, educational, patriotic,
16 and civic work to make certain that blind and low-
17 vision veterans can live and thrive;

18 (5) wishes members of the Blinded Veterans
19 Association continued success in their ongoing ef-
20 forts to live out their motto, “Blinded veterans help-
21 ing blinded veterans”, by preserving and strength-
22 ening a spirit of fellowship among blinded veterans
23 so that they may give mutual aid and assistance to
24 one another; and

1 (6) reaffirms the commitment of the Senate to
2 supporting and improving the services and opportu-
3 nities available to all veterans, including those with
4 disabilities, ensuring they receive the respect and
5 care they deserve.