

Policy brief

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Status Quo Policy Situation The Department of Veterans Affairs is providing inadequate healthcare and dysfunctional healthcare access, and has been ineffective in handling the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder appropriately, as evidenced by the astoundingly high and rising rates of veterans who are attempting suicide. Efforts to address this issue have been abysmally unsuccessful. In 2009 alone, there were 1800 veterans from two wars who attempted suicide. 3 The development and implementation of new policy is critical and urgent. 4

The Department of Veteran Affairs utilizes 132. 2 billion dollars to provide each veteran with \$2, 600 per month for treatment. 5 Many hospitals and clinics have been opened to cater to these patients. However, the department has made little progress in minimizing the suicide rates, with lengthy waiting periods and single counseling sessions only proving to be inadequate.

Cogan, J. (2009). US Military Suicide Rate At Record High. World Socialist. Retrieved on March 20, 2012 from:

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/feb2009/suic-f04.shtml>

2GovTrack. us. (2010). Veterans Mental Health Screening and Assessment Act. H. R. 1308.

Retrieved on March 20, 2012 from:

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-1308>

Policy Recommendation

Support the Veterans Mental Health Screening Assessment Act proposed by representatives Rooney and McMahon. The Act will help prevent veteran suicide by;

providing timely cerebral disorder screening

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enable tracking and monitoring of veterans who are high suicide risks
making war returnee screening mandatory for veterans, thus reducing
waiting periods and stigma

correct incompetency in the Department of Veteran Affairs that has resulted
in lawsuits being filed by Veterans for Common Sense and other advocacy
groups for veterans disabled by recent wars. 6

Alternative Policy Arguments Refuted

The Bill earlier experienced stiff opposition from Senator Coburn, M. D. (R-
OK) who suggested:

it would lead to documentation of a mental health condition, interfering with
the right of a veteran in applying for a firearms license
compulsory screening is an insult

He had strongly cautioned the House about enacting the bill. 7 However,
according to the Senator's website, he is no longer objecting.

3GovTrack. us. (2010).

4 Glantz, A. (2010). Investigation: Suicide Rates Soaring Among WWII Vets.
New America Media.

5GovTrack. us. (2010).

6 National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2007). Multicultural Issues in Veterans
Mental Health.

Retrieved on March 20, 2012 from: http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Fact_Sheets1&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=53483

7GovTrack. us. (2010).