

**Andy Thompson**  
95<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District

Finance  
Energy and Natural Resources  
Agriculture and Rural Development

Chair: Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Development and Natural Resources



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**Ohio General Assembly**  
**Ohio House of Representatives**  
**Representative Andy Thompson**

May 16, 2017

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Craig, I'm pleased to provide sponsor testimony for legislation that will make the first Saturday in May Veterans Suicide Awareness Day. This idea came from a constituent of mine, Jadon Rutledge. Jadon is a veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and will be offering proponent testimony.

It is estimated, that 22 veterans commit suicide every day. That number is far too many. Often it seems that after serving our country valiantly overseas, our veterans are fighting another war back here at home. Many veterans do not know where to turn when it comes to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and suicide prevention. They feel lost and alone.

Programs such as 24/7 Veterans Crisis Line and [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net) have been established to help veterans that are in need and to let them know they are definitely not alone. Awareness of the availability of these programs needs to be raised so that we can help veterans and their families know who to reach out to when they or a loved one is in crisis. Programs can save lives if veterans and others know they exist.

In 2014, Veterans accounted for 18% of all deaths from suicide among U.S. adults, while Veterans made up 8.5% of the US population. In 2010, Veterans accounted for 22% of all deaths from suicide and 9.7% of the population.

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The 24/7 Veterans Crisis Line provides immediate access to mental health crisis intervention and support. Veterans call the national suicide prevention hotline number, 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and then “Press 1” to reach highly skilled responders trained in suicide prevention and crisis intervention. VCL also includes a chat service and texting option.

Since the establishment of the Veterans Crisis Line through May 2016 the VCL has answered over 2.3 million calls, made over 289,000 chat connections and over 55,000 texts. They have also initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in imminent suicidal crisis over 61,000 times, as well as provided over 376,000 referrals to a VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator which helps to ensure veterans are connected to local care.

By establishing a “Veterans Suicide Awareness Day”, to supplement Veterans Suicide Awareness month in September, civilians and veterans alike can draw attention to this tragic issue and increase awareness of resources that are available to help those veterans in need. Help stand up for those who have stood up for our country. Let veterans know they are not alone.

Representative Lanese would like to offer sponsor testimony as well, and we'd be glad to answer any questions you have.

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Lanese, Ranking Member Craig, we ask for your favorable consideration of House Bill 202.