

Dear Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, and Ranking Member, Leader Antonio, and members of the Senate health Committee,

My name is Scott Horsington, and I am an Army Veteran and advocate for the National Veterans Memorial and Museum.

I wanted to tell you a little about myself and show you what a huge difference you can make for Veterans.

In 2007, I retired from the Army after almost 21 years. I joined as a helicopter mechanic right out of high school because I didn't think college was for me.

Before long, I realized how much I valued serving, so I decided to go all-in and make a career in the Army. I re-enlisted, transferred to the infantry, and ended up in the 75th Ranger Regiment. Six years later, I applied to flight school and flew Apache helicopters for 12 years.

I call myself lucky, but some would disagree. Over the years, in some shape or form, I served in the Invasion of Panama, Desert Storm, Haiti, Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo... ending with three deployments to Iraq in five years. If something was happening, I wanted to be involved.

But when I retired, my mentality was that I was done with the Army. I had done my time and my service was over. It was time to move on and let the past be the past.

Maybe that works for some people, but it didn't work for me. For the next 12 years, I wasn't involved with the Veteran community at all. Frankly, it was lonely; I missed the brotherhood and sense of belonging I felt in the Army. I didn't know many people in Columbus, Ohio, where I was living ... and, for a long time after my wife and I got divorced, my only friends were people at work. I wasn't in a very good place.

Then, in early 2019, Lt. General Michael Ferriter, U.S. Army (Ret), who is the President and CEO of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum, reached out to me to introduce himself and invited me to attend Rally Point, the NVMM's free event which brings together Veterans and those who wish to support Veterans around a different topic each month.

For the first time in a long time, I was around other Veterans. I got to talk to people who were like me and understood me. After the event, I walked through the Museum and that was it: I was hooked.

If you don't know, the NVMM is not your typical museum with tanks, jeeps, and helicopters. It's about people, a place where you can hear Veterans tell their own stories in their own voices. As a Veteran, you feel that this is a building that is dedicated to you, your friends, and all your brothers and sisters in service.

That's why I think it has such a huge impact on people who visit. I've seen Veterans walk in and stop just feet inside the door. It looks like they've been hit with a sledgehammer. As they stand and look around, you can see that they've been emotionally impacted before barely even making it into the Museum.

I know that's what it was like for me. On the Monday morning after my first visit to the Museum, my boss asked me how my weekend was. I told him, "It was life-changing."

At the time, I'm not sure I knew just how true that statement would come to be. I have become deeply involved with the NVMM's Resilience and Wellness programming. For me that means going to weekly Brazilian Jiu Jitsu classes, but for others that can mean connecting with yoga or healing through the arts. Through this, I have connected with people who have lived my experiences and understand my perspectives.

The NVMM has encouraged me to be more open about talking about my service. After years of not being involved with Veterans, I'm now very active with Veteran-related causes and organizations. My daughter Hannah and I have bonded as volunteers at the Museum, I've joined the American Legion, and I've found a community of support and friendship through the Veterans I've met at the Museum.

Truly, the NVMM, and their commitment to providing a welcoming community for Veterans like me, has been a game-changer for my whole life. My overall attitude is better, I'm happier, and I'm less stressed. I've reconnected and repaired important relationships in my life - including my relationship with my wife, JoEllen. In fact, we've just recently remarried.

And I know it's not just me. When I speak to Veterans visiting the Museum or participating in programming with me, I can see how much the NVMM means to them too.

So that is why I felt compelled to submit testimony in support of the National Veterans Memorial and Museum. Your investment in NVMM CARES will make an incredible impact on ensuring that stories like mine are the rule and not the exception for Veterans.