



Department of Ohio, District 12

Nicholette Bolte, Commander

Robert Leach, Quartermaster

TO: Honorable Terry Johnson, Chair, Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Honorable Steve Wilson, Vice Chair, Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Honorable Hearcel F. Craig, Ranking Member, Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Honorable Brian M. Chavez, Member, Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Honorable Shane Wilkin, Member, Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
FROM: Andrea M. Neutzling, Senior Vice Commander, District 12, Veterans of Foreign Wars Dept. of Ohio
DATE: February 26th, 2024
RE: IN PROPONENT TO SCR 9 (135TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY)

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Craig and Honorable Members Chavez and Wilkin, of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 9.

My name is Andrea Neutzling, I am the Legislative Chair and Senior Vice Commander for District 12, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Ohio. I'm here today on behalf of my District which covers Senate Districts 14, 17 and 30, consisting of Athens, Gallia, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Pike, Ross, Scioto, and Vinton Counties. I am a 100% Service-Connected Army Veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I have been advocating for Veterans at a National level since testifying at a Senate Field Hearing on Appalachian Veterans held by Senator Brown in 2010, to helping get the PACT Act passed in 2022. At a state level I have gotten more involved this past year by testifying for and against bills that can benefit or harm the Veteran Community in Ohio.

In every branch of the military, there is a stigma about going on sick call, even more so when it comes to Mental Health. The United States has been in active combat situations for half of my life, and almost half of that time I served in the Army. While active duty in South Korea, I was sexually harassed at 2 am by an NCO in the Quonset Hut barracks I was assigned to, which after reporting I was moved to regular barracks instead. Upon becoming a Reservist I deployed to Iraq, where I was raped by 2 soldiers from the Unit that was being replaced by the unit I was deployed with. The base I was on didn't have any Mental Health doctors on it, I had to process it on my own, or seek the counsel of the Chaplain, who after talking to me and proceeding to tell me that I "didn't act like a rape victim", made me lose all trust in Chaplains. I also have some combat related Post Traumatic Stress. I did not seek any Mental Health care until 2008. Why? At that point I was angry at the Army. I was angry that my son was 10-month-old when I deployed, and I got injured and kept on Active Duty in New Jersey until 2007 and by that point my then husband had taken our son to Texas and I hardly got to see him, until his funeral in May 2008. July 2008, I faced a choice between stop-loss or voluntarily extending my service for 6 months, due to not enough Intelligence Analyst joining the Reserves. My 6 month voluntary extension got turned into another 10 months of stop-loss. I got out in April 2010, 3 months shy of my 10 year mark. From 2008 until 2011, I went through 4 different Mental Health doctors until I found one that I felt comfortable with discussing my Military Sexual Trauma, and here soon I do plan to start talking about the other half of my combat related issues with my doctor.

Many veterans, me included, tend to turn towards self-medication for our PTSD, in the form of alcohol or drugs. I'm one of the lucky ones that managed to get the help needed before it became too late for me. Many veterans currently serving service members haven't gotten that luxury. Mostly because of the stigma associated with getting Mental Health treatment. We have veterans that turn to drugs, which then turns to other criminal activities in order to pay for their drug addictions. We veterans need the VA to step up and expand their mental health care access and capabilities.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee to pass this Concurrent Resolution to urge The United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the United States Congress to support the provision of prompt and comprehensive mental health treatment to military personnel and veterans who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and other service-related stress disorders.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea M. Neutzling
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