

THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF



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Senate Armed Services Committee Testimony

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein and remaining committee members good morning. I would first like to thank you for the opportunity to provide you this written testimony on behalf of The American Legion in support of S.R. 21&22. The American Legion was founded in 1919 as an organization to support Veterans and their families once they leave the service. Recent Conflicts like Iraq and Afghanistan have shown Organizations such as mine the dire need we as a country have for increased mental health benefits for Veterans. Iraq and Afghanistan being the largest and longest conflicts since the Vietnam war and since the Vietnam war we have learned more about the necessity of mental health treatment. Currently the Department of Veterans Affairs has done many amazing things to progress the treatment of Veterans suffering from mental health illnesses. The VA has counseling, evidence based therapy, medication, talk therapy, residential programs, supported work settings, and other forms of therapy based on the individual needs of the Veteran. Besides the programs the VA currently has they have also established a national center for PTSD which is used for researching PTSD and how to combat that. Myself along with the American Legion is a large supporter of urging Congress to support the provision of prompt and comprehensive mental health treatment. Regarding S.R. 22 as a Marine Corps Veteran myself I have completed multiple VA Claims and have had to endure the dreadful wait times to get a decision. The average VA claim wait time according to VA.gov is 145 days if it takes longer than the average wait time your claim is then considered "backlogged" and there are roughly 250,000 back logged claims currently. Those numbers will only rise with the expansion of VA eligibility from the PACT ACT. By urging congress to somehow take action and shorten wait times for VA claims processing it can help Veterans who may be homeless, short on money, or have a medical need but do not have insurance or qualifying coverage until they receive a VA rating.

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to give this written testimony and I hope for the betterment of our Veterans we are able to continue on to congress and make an exceptional change.