

October 5, 2021

Dear Members of Congress:

Representatives Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.) and Elaine Luria (D-Va.) recently introduced a congressional resolution ([H. Res. 512](#)) to declare Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021, the first annual “National Warrior Call Day.” The language has since been added as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act. **We are writing to encourage members of Congress, particularly conferees to the National Defense Authorization Act negotiations, to ensure this amendment is passed and the commemorative date is made official.**

As former secretaries of the Department of Veterans Affairs, we understand firsthand the challenges active-duty service members and veterans face and the need for their peers, friends, and family to lift them up. With its simple mission to implore Americans – but especially active-duty service members and veterans – to connect with someone who has worn or is currently wearing the uniform and let them know they care – Warrior Call can foster greater connectivity, compassion, and better outcomes. **We recognize with the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the return of even more troops, that such an awareness campaign is especially timely and a valuable non-government tool to put into action.**

Warrior Call is designed to address the pressing challenge of military and veteran suicide. Lawmakers understand by now that military suicide outpaces the public in a significant way. The resolution presents some of the relevant statistics succinctly, including:

- The number of suicides of members of the armed forces serving on active duty increased to 377 in 2020, compared to 348 the previous year.
- Veteran suicide has steadily increased since 2014 with 6,435 veterans taking their own lives in 2018, though dipped modestly in 2019.
- After adjusting for sex and age, the rate of veteran suicide in 2018 was 27.5 per 100,000 individuals, higher than the rate among all United States adults at 18.3.

As the resolution also notes, roughly two-thirds of these veterans who take their own lives have had no contact with the VA. By no means a replacement for full care, Warrior Call will help connect veterans into the VA system and its attendant focus on helping veterans experiencing intense personal problems.

A “warrior call” involves a call to military members and/or veteran but can also be realized through in-person meetings or video conferencing. The goal is to have individuals “make a call, take a call.” It is not an overstatement to note that increasing connection within the military community and steering individuals to important resources will save lives.

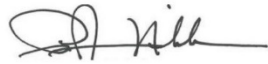
In short, enactment of this resolution will lend needed credibility to this project and enhance the efforts to create an official day on the calendar. In doing so, awareness of this problem will only increase, which in turn can have a real positive impact and help many Americans.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

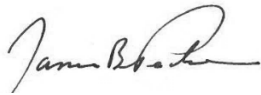
Sincerely yours,



Anthony Principi – 4th United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs



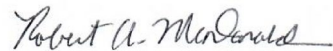
Jim Nicholson – 5th United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs



James B. Peake – 6<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs



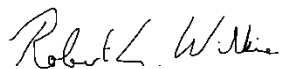
Eric Shinseki – 7<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs



Robert A. McDonald – 8th United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs



David Shulkin, M.D. – 9<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs



Robert Wilkie – 10<sup>th</sup> United States Secretary of Veterans Affairs