



A Heroes Gift

Governor Rick Perry's Mission to Heal America's Veterans

WRITTEN BY MELISSA ORSAK

After quietly enduring anxiety and insomnia for 40 years, Governor Rick Perry concludes, his voice steady but charged with conviction. “If I’m going to speak for this,” he says, “I’m going to go through the treatment myself.” He is not referring to politics, policy, or an upcoming campaign; he’s talking about a gift—a revolutionary form of regenerative medicine that has the potential to transform brain science and provide healing for the veterans whom America has long neglected.

This gift is ibogaine, a psychoactive substance derived from the Tabernanthe iboga root, an African shrub utilized for centuries in medicinal and spiritual practices. Research has shown that ibogaine can help treat traumatic brain injuries, opioid and cocaine addictions, PTSD, and even promote brain cell regeneration.

Perry’s journey begins far from the corridors of power. Growing up on a cotton farm, he describes his childhood as “charmed,” with loving parents and ample open land. However, beneath this idyllic surface, he suffered three severe concussions in his teenage years—two while playing sports and one while unloading horses, leaving behind invisible scars. “I had no recollection of any issues until I was 22,” he recalls. It was then that the pressures of pilot training in the Air Force triggered anxiety and insomnia that would haunt him for decades.

In 2023, at the age of 73, Perry underwent ibogaine treatment at AMBIO Life Sciences, a facility in South Tijuana known for its work with veterans. He arrived on a Monday, received ibogaine on Tuesday, recovered on Wednesday, and underwent 5-MeO-DMT therapy on Thursday. By Friday, he was back home. The results were profound. “My sleep improved substantially, and the anxiety virtually went away.” Perry carefully tracks his health using devices, such as the Oura ring and Whoop band, monitoring his sleep metrics, and the data confirmed what he felt: something had changed. Follow-up treatments vary among patients;

some may never need to return, while others might require additional treatments until their healing is complete.

The implications extend well beyond Perry’s personal story. In 2024, a clinical trial backed by Stanford treated 30 special operations veterans, all of whom had traumatic brain injuries. Many of these veterans also experienced moderate to severe PTSD, depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol dependency, and seven had previously attempted suicide. After undergoing therapy with ibogaine and 5-MeO-DMT at AMBIO, the results were astonishing.

One month and up to a year after treatment, patients exhibited a perceptible reduction in symptoms: 88% in PTSD symptoms, 87% in depression symptoms, and 81% in anxiety symptoms. Additionally, every participant showed measurable increases in white matter, often referred to as the brain’s “superhighway”, leading to increased cognitive abilities.



This evidence is not merely anecdotal. fMRI scans conducted before and after treatment revealed a remarkable development: the regeneration of brain tissue. “We’ve been told that when brain cells die, they’re gone,” Perry states. “There is very powerful evidence that that is not true.”

THE GOVERNOR’S AWAKENING: HOW ONE DINNER CHANGED EVERYTHING

Perry’s ibogaine journey began long before his treatment in 2023; it started with a dinner invitation.

In the summer of 2006, just before launching into an election sprint, Perry’s wife, Anita, insisted on a quick vacation to San Diego, California. What was meant to be a moment of rest turned into a life-altering encounter. By sheer coincidence,

Perry’s security team met a Navy lieutenant commander who offered the governor a private tour of the Naval Special Warfare Center. That commander was Jake Ellzey—now a U.S. Congressman from Central Texas.

During the tour, a tall Texan Navy SEAL named Marcus Luttrell volunteered to assist. To express his gratitude, Perry invited Luttrell to dinner, where he learned about Luttrell’s incredible journey. After dinner, Perry remarked, “If you’re ever in Austin, come by and see us,” Perry recalls. “It was a nice thing to say. You don’t expect someone to actually show up.”

But Marcus did. In May 2007, he arrived at the Governor’s Mansion, and by August 2009, he was living with the Perrys, finding refuge in their home. “It was his safe place,” Perry explains.



GOVERNOR RICK PERRY AND BRYAN HUBBARD

“He would come and go, but he knew he was welcome.”

THE COST OF WAR, THE FAILURE OF SYSTEMS

Through Luttrell, Perry and his wife were exposed to the harsh realities of PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and the bureaucratic challenges veterans face. “He had to sleep with a light on. He was addicted to opioids. The government literally gave him a sack of pills” and sent him on his way.

Despite his service, Marcus was not eligible for TRICARE. Perry tried everything, calling admirals and lobbying the Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus. Perry told Mabus, “I don’t want to embarrass your boss, but I will. This kid needs to be reinstated, reevaluated, and you’re clearly going to see that he is not fit for duty, and you can make him eligible for TRICARE.”

To Mabus’s credit, Marcus was reinstated, reevaluated, and deemed unfit for duty within the month, making him eligible for the care he desperately needed. Perry adds, “By the grace of God, I met some people who were willing to do the technical surgeries on him and Dr. Stan C. Jones forever in my book has a special place in heaven.”

FROM TRAGEDY TO TRANSFORMATION

These experiences ignited Perry’s passion for ibogaine. “I’ve always supported the military,” he says. “But when you write a letter every week for a decade to families who’ve lost someone, it changes you.”

As Governor, Perry became the Commander-in-Chief of Texas’s military forces. After 9/11, he witnessed the true cost of war—not just in lives lost, but in lives shattered. He explains that there’s “a tiny percentage of people who go to combat,” but those individuals carry the weight for all of us.

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RICK PERRY

The stories of Marcus and his brother, Morgan Lautrell, prompted Perry to explore alternative treatments. Both men underwent ibogaine treatment in Mexico. Morgan, who is now a Congressman, speaks openly about how one treatment helped him manage his anger and trauma. Marcus returned annually for four years until “the medicine told him he was done.”

Perry believes this medicine could revolutionize how we treat trauma, addiction, and degenerative brain conditions. “If this medicine does what it appears it is doing, it will change brain science forever.”

THE MOVEMENT BEHIND THE MEDICINE: AFI, VETS, AND THE FIGHT FOR CHANGE

Perry is not only a supporter of ibogaine; he is also the chairman of Americans for Ibogaine (AFI), a nonprofit organization established in 2025 to lead the national initiative for psychedelic research.

AFI’s mission is clear: “to advance public understanding and responsible medical access to ibogaine for addiction, trauma, and co-occurring mental health conditions.” Led by CEO Bryan Hubbard, AFI unites scientists, veterans, clinicians, and advocates to push for

FDA-approved research and safe, legal treatment options. Hubbard co-chairs national summits and coordinates multi-state efforts to replicate Texas's model.

VETS: THE HEART OF THE HEALING

If AFI represents the brain of the movement, VETS—Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions—serves as its heart. Founded by Navy SEAL Marcus Capone and his wife, Amber, VETS has assisted over 900 veterans in accessing psychedelic-assisted therapy abroad, striving to reduce veteran suicide rates. Their annual gala at Hotel Del gathers warfighters, researchers, and policymakers to celebrate progress and raise essential funds.

One veteran impacted by VETS is Sergeant Dakota Meyer, a Medal of Honor recipient. After experiencing harrowing combat in Afghanistan's

Sangin Valley, Meyer's PTSD left him sobbing in a closet. "He tried everything," Perry explains. "Ibogaine saved his life."

EDUCATION, RISK, AND THE REALITIES OF PSYCHEDELIC MEDICINE

Despite its promise, Perry is open about the risks associated with ibogaine, stating, "Ibogaine has a cardiac risk." However, he also notes, "It is very manageable." Researchers at Stanford have developed a magnesium drip protocol that has proven safe in over 1,000 treatments for veterans at AMBIO, with no recorded cardiac incidents.

As research continues to advance, education in this area is also expanding. The dangers of polypharmacy—when veterans are prescribed multiple medications that can have cumulative side effects—are well-documented. In contrast, there are fewer resources available that compare these risks to the potential benefits of psychedelic therapies. Organizations like the Coalition for Psychedelic Safety and Education are working to bridge this gap by advocating for balanced messaging and harm reduction strategies.

TEXAS AS GROUND ZERO

In 2023, Bryan Hubbard created and led in managing the Kentucky Ibogaine Initiative, which was a \$42 million plan funded by opioid settlement dollars. However, the initiative was terminated by the state's Attorney General before reaching completion. In 2024, Texas stakeholders expressed interest in launching a new psychedelic research effort and were advised to build upon the original Kentucky model. With Governor Perry stepping in as a key supporter, the initiative was successfully revived and relocated to Texas.

Texas is now ground zero for ibogaine research. Perry played a key role in passing legislation to fund clinical trials and expand access to plant medicine. Currently, at least a dozen states, including Mississippi, Colorado, and South

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Carolina, are considering following Texas's example. Interested states will meet this fall to learn from Texas's approach. As Perry explains, "We're not saying this is how you have to do it," but they are saying: it works.

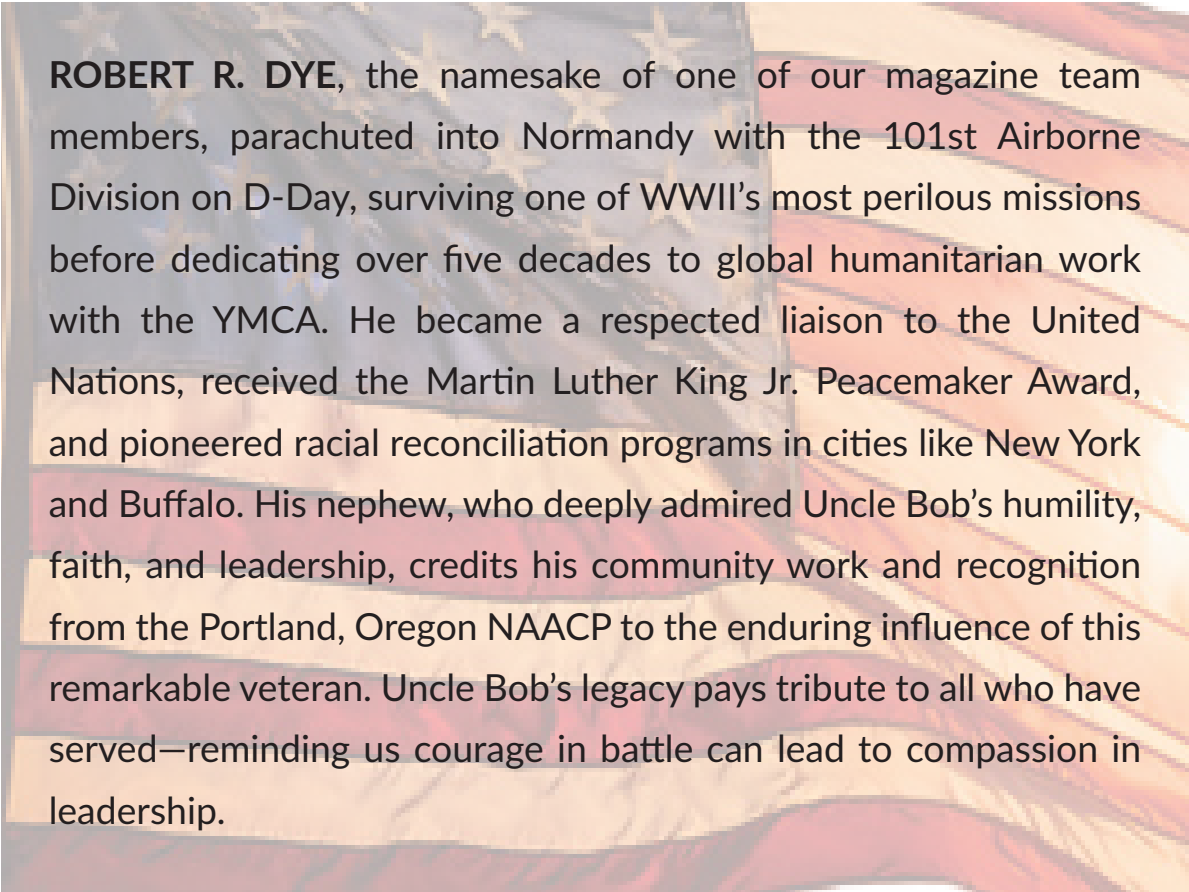
In 2025, Texas made history by investing \$50 million in ibogaine research, marking the largest publicly funded psychedelic initiative in the world. This funding is matched by a private drug development partner, with Texas retaining a stake in every successful treatment and a portion given to veterans. According to Perry, this initiative is not merely a grant; it is a partnership that will succeed. The clinical trials will take place through a state university hospital, which will ensure rigorous oversight and long-term objectives.

"How bad do you have to hate someone," Perry asks, "to not make this available to all?" For years, Americans have traveled abroad for ibogaine treatment—Mexico, Canada, even Ukraine. Perry believes that we need to make these treatments safe, legal, and accessible within the United States.

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING

This story transcends the drug itself; it reflects a transformative shift in how we address trauma, honor service, and confront past failures. Perry's journey—from cotton fields to combat-ready pilot, from governor to advocate—demonstrates the power of personal transformation and sacrifice.

The gift of ibogaine is not merely a treatment; it embodies hope. Hope that healing is possible, that we can unite and strive for improvement, and that we must do better for our veterans and our country.



ROBERT R. DYE, the namesake of one of our magazine team members, parachuted into Normandy with the 101st Airborne Division on D-Day, surviving one of WWII's most perilous missions before dedicating over five decades to global humanitarian work with the YMCA. He became a respected liaison to the United Nations, received the Martin Luther King Jr. Peacemaker Award, and pioneered racial reconciliation programs in cities like New York and Buffalo. His nephew, who deeply admired Uncle Bob's humility, faith, and leadership, credits his community work and recognition from the Portland, Oregon NAACP to the enduring influence of this remarkable veteran. Uncle Bob's legacy pays tribute to all who have served—reminding us courage in battle can lead to compassion in leadership.