

June 19, 2018

Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Johnny Isakson, Chairman
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Jon Tester, Ranking Member
Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Tester:

On behalf of the millions of veterans, service members and family members we represent and advocate for, we want to first thank you for passage of the VA MISSION Act (P.L. 115-182), historic legislation that will consolidate and reform VA's community care programs; strengthen VA's ability to recruit, hire and retain medical personnel; review, realign and modernize VA's health care infrastructure; and extend eligibility to VA's comprehensive caregiver assistance program to veterans severely injured before September 11, 2001. With the law set to begin taking effect next year, it is imperative that Congress now ensure that VA has the resources necessary to fully and faithfully implement the many critical provisions of this legislation.

For that reason, we urge you and all Senators to support and vote for Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy's new "Complete the Mission" amendment, which would allow Congress to provide VA with sufficient resources required to implement the provisions of the VA MISSION Act, without triggering sequestration or requiring cuts to other VA programs.

As you know, the VA MISSION Act would effectively move funding responsibility for care currently provided through the Veterans Choice Program from mandatory appropriations to a new discretionary program that must fit within overall domestic discretionary caps. However, the current domestic discretionary budget cap for FY 2019, and the anticipated caps for FY 2020 and FY 2021, did not contemplate the new and increased costs associated with the VA MISSION Act. As such, Congress may not have the ability to fully fund all of the programs, benefits and services that our veterans, their families and survivors have earned.

It is imperative that VA not be forced to choose between fully funding its hospitals and clinics for veterans seeking care inside the VA health care system, or fully funding community care for veterans who would otherwise be forced to wait too long or travel too far to access VA care. We do not want to return to a time when veterans were forced onto waiting lists to get the care they have earned through their service and sacrifice.

The new Shelby-Leahy "Complete the Mission" amendment would allow Congress to appropriate additional discretionary funding to meet the new requirements of the VA MISSION Act without triggering sequestration. However, unlike a prior amendment that had been

June 19, 2018

Page 2

discussed, this amendment would limit the amount of such funding to just \$1.6 billion for FY 2018, \$8.67 billion for FY 2019 and \$9.5 billion for FY 2020.

We are very concerned that without assurance of sufficient funding, reform and modernization of the VA health care system – which millions of ill and injured veterans rely on – could be delayed or endangered. Further, tens of thousands of caregivers for severely injured veterans might have to continue waiting before they can receive the benefits they deserve. For these reasons, it is absolutely critical that the Shelby-Leahy “Complete the Mission” amendment to the MilCon-VA Appropriations bill be adopted by the Senate, approved by the House, and enacted into law.

As leaders of the nation’s veterans and military service organizations, we again want to thank you for approving the VA MISSION Act in order to fulfill the promises our nation owes to the men and women who served. We now call on you to ensure that VA has sufficient funding to implement this legislation by supporting and voting for the Shelby-Leahy “Complete the Mission” amendment to the MilCon-VA Appropriations bill. Millions of injured and ill veterans and their family caregivers are counting on your support.

Respectfully,




Garry J. Augustine
Washington Executive Director
DAV (Disabled American Veterans)



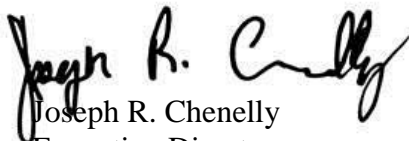
Robert E. Wallace
Executive Director
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States



Louis Celli, Jr.
Executive Director
Government & Veterans Affairs
The American Legion



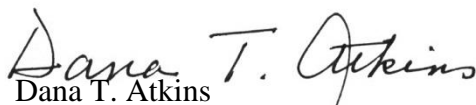
Carl Blake
Executive Director
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Joseph R. Chenelly
Executive Director
AMVETS



Rick Weidman
Executive Director for Policy
Vietnam Veterans of America



Dana T. Atkins
Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
President
Military Officers Association of America



René Bardof
Senior Vice President
Government & Community Relations
Wounded Warrior Project

June 19, 2018

Page 3



Paul Rieckhoff
Founder and CEO
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America



Neil Van Ess
National Commander
Military Order of the Purple Heart



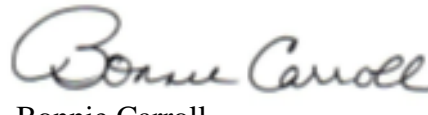
Steve Schwab
Executive Director
Elizabeth Dole Foundation



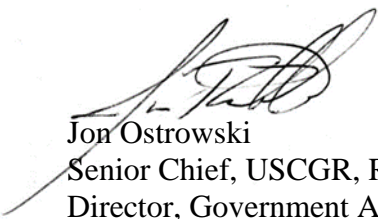
Deirdre Park Holleman, Esq
Washington Executive Director
The Retired Enlisted Association



Norman Rosenheim
Chairman
Jewish War Veterans of the USA



Bonnie Carroll
President and Founder
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors



Jon Ostrowski
Senior Chief, USCGR, Retired
Director, Government Affairs
Non Commissioned Officers Association



Randy Reid
Executive Director
U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers
Association



RADM Christopher Cole, USN (Ret.)
National Executive Director
Association of the United States Navy



Paul K. Hopper
Colonel, USMC (Ret.)
National President
Marine Corps Reserve Association



Michael Cowan MD, VADM USN (Ret)
Executive Director
AMSUS



Kristina Kaufmann
Executive Director
Code of Support Foundation

June 19, 2018

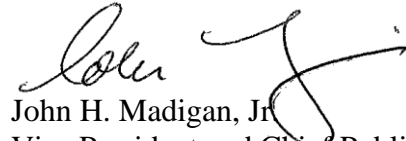
Page 4



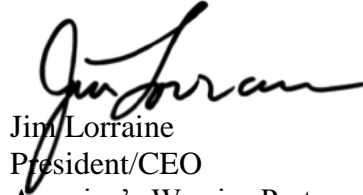
Joseph C. Bogart MA
Executive Director
Blinded Veteran's Association



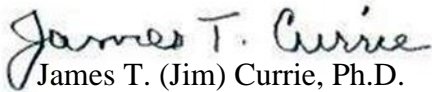
Thomas J. Snee
National Executive Director
Fleet Reserve Association



John H. Madigan, Jr.
Vice President and Chief Public Policy Officer
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention



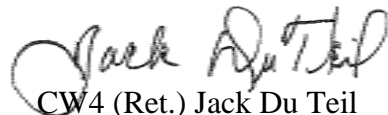
Jim Lorraine
President/CEO
America's Warrior Partnership



James T. (Jim) Currie, Ph.D.
Colonel, USA (Ret.)
Executive Director
Commissioned Officers Association
of the U.S. Public Health Service



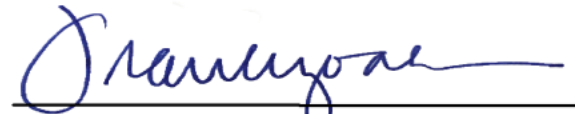
Keith Reed
Executive Director
Air Force Sergeants Association



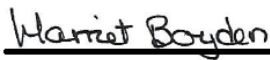
CW4 (Ret.) Jack Du Teil
Executive Director
United States Army Warrant Officers
Association



Army Aviation Association of America



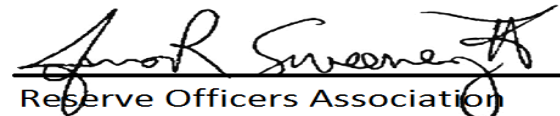
Enlisted Association of the National
Guard of the US



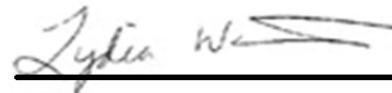
Gold Star Wives of America



Naval Enlisted Reserve Assn.



Reserve Officers Association



Service Women's Action Network

Cc: Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby
Senate Appropriations Committee Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy

Alphabetical List of Letter Signers

1. Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
2. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
3. America's Warrior Partnership
4. The American Legion
5. AMSUS, The Society of Federal Health Professionals
6. AMVETS (American Veterans)
7. Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA)
8. Association of the US Navy (AUSN)
9. Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
10. Code of Support Foundation (COSF)
11. Commissioned Officers Association of the US Public Health Services Inc (COA)
12. DAV (Disabled American Veterans)
13. Elizabeth Dole Foundation (EDF)
14. Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the US (EANGUS)
15. Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
16. Gold Star Wives of America (GSW)
17. Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)
18. Jewish War Veterans (JWV)
19. Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA)
20. Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)
21. Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH)
22. Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
23. Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA)
24. Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
25. Reserve Officers Association (ROA)
26. Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)
27. The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)
28. Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)
29. US Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)
30. USCG Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA)
31. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
32. Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)
33. Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)