

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 3
INTRODUCED BY B. BESSETTE

A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING CONGRESSIONAL ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES FOR VETERANS.

WHEREAS, Montana has one of the highest ratios of veterans to population, with veterans making up 10% of Montana's total population and more than 13% of its population 18 years of age and older; and

WHEREAS, Montana continues to have one of the highest suicide rates in the country, and studies show that veterans are at higher risk of suicide in Western, rural states and account for more than one out of every five suicide deaths in Montana; and

WHEREAS, recent articles highlight an increase in "protest suicides" carried out by veterans in the parking lots of hospitals operated by the Veterans Health Administration, emphasizing once again the urgent need to deliver on mental health care needs for U.S. servicemen and women; and

WHEREAS, about three-fourths of Montana veterans are eligible for health care services through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and about two-thirds of eligible Montana veterans are enrolled with the Montana VA health care system; and

WHEREAS, Montana has a clear and imminent interest in ensuring that the best level of care is provided to the state's veterans through the Montana VA health care system.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the United States Congress consider enacting legislation that would:

(1) expand the availability of VA mental health services and community-based transition assistance for individuals who have recently separated from military service, including for those who were dismissed with other-than-honorable discharges;

(2) establish new grant programs and additional opportunities for the VA to partner with state and local organizations on the delivery of mental health services for veterans, including services provided via telemedicine;

(3) require the VA to assess the capacity of its existing mental health workforce and establish a

1 scholarship program for mental health professionals in training who commit to serving veterans after they
2 graduate;

3 (4) require the VA to develop metrics and monitor its progress in accomplishing the goals and objectives
4 outlined in its National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide (2018-2028); and

5 (5) require the VA to assemble an inventory of its existing suicide prevention outreach efforts, including
6 any partnerships with state and local entities, and to evaluate the outcomes of these efforts.

7 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send copies of this resolution to the President
8 of the United States, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Majority and Minority
9 Leaders of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and to each member of
10 the Montana Congressional Delegation.

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