

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

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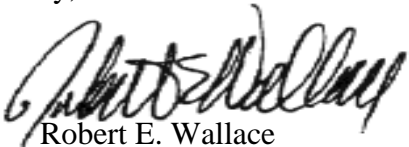
discussed, this amendment would limit the amount of such funding to just \$1.6 billion for FY 2018, \$8.67 billion for FY 2019 and \$9.5 billion for FY 2020.


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,

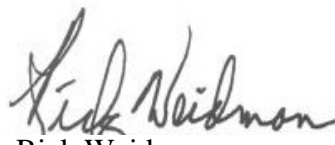
  
Garry J. Augustine  
Washington Executive Director  
DAV (Disabled American Veterans)

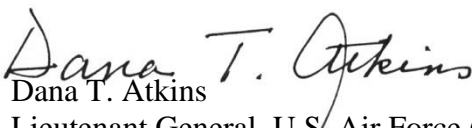
  
Robert E. Wallace  
Executive Director  
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

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

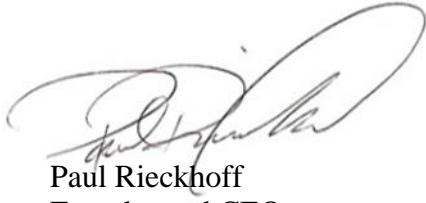
  
Carl Blake  
Executive Director  
Paralyzed Veterans of America

  
Joseph R. Chenelly  
Executive Director  
AMVETS

  
Rick Weidman  
Executive Director for Policy  
Vietnam Veterans of America

  
Dana T. Atkins  
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President  
Military Officers Association of America

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



Paul Rieckhoff  
Founder and CEO  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America



Neil Van Ess  
National Commander  
Military Order of the Purple Heart



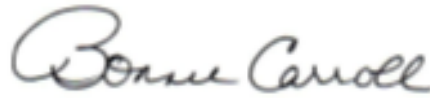
Steve Schwab  
Executive Director  
Elizabeth Dole Foundation



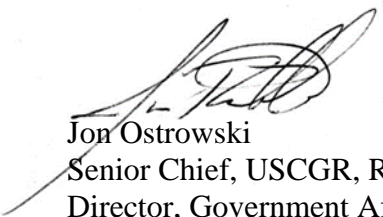
Deirdre Park Holleman, Esq  
Washington Executive Director  
The Retired Enlisted Association



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

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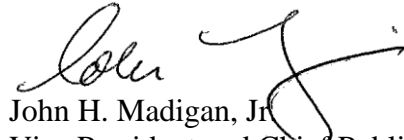
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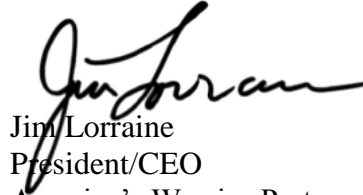
Joseph C. Bogart MA  
Executive Director  
Blinded Veteran's Association



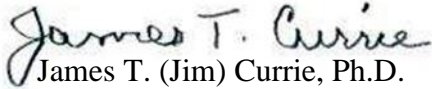
Thomas J. Snee  
National Executive Director  
Fleet Reserve Association



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



Jim Lorraine  
President/CEO  
America's Warrior Partnership

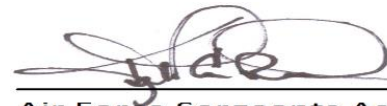


James T. (Jim) Currie, Ph.D.  
Colonel, USA (Ret.)  
Executive Director  
Commissioned Officers Association  
of the U.S. Public Health Service



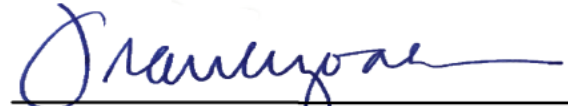
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Army Aviation Association of America



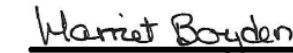
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Air Force Sergeants Association



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Enlisted Association of the National  
Guard of the US



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Gold Star Wives of America



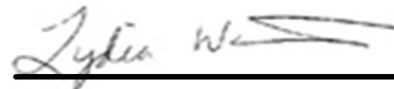
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Naval Enlisted Reserve Assn.



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Reserve Officers Association



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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. USCG Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA)
30. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
31. Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)
32. Wounded Warrior Project (WWP)