

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

REPUBLICANS | RANKING MEMBER MIKE BOST

H.R. 5092: The Expanding the Families of Veterans Access to Mental Health Services Act

Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Readjustment Counseling Service Centers – more commonly called Vet Centers – provide a range of individual, group, marriage, and family counseling as well as peer support services to active-duty servicemembers, combat veterans, members of the National Guard and Reserve, and certain military family members. Vet Centers also provide bereavement counseling to family members of military personnel, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, who die while on active-duty. Vet Centers are community-based and not co-located with VA medical center campuses. Vet Center services are confidential and free.

The Expanding the Families of Veterans Access to Mental Health Services Act would expand eligibility for bereavement counseling at Vet Centers to the families of veterans who die by suicide. This would expand the reach of Vet Center services to more grieving military families. It would also lend a comforting hand to the loved ones of the approximately 17 veterans who die by suicide each and every day by offering them a safe place to receive the care they need.

The Message:

- While we continue to work to stop veteran suicide once-and-for-all, we must never forget the grieving families of the veterans who have already been lost to it.
- The families of veterans who die by suicide are coping with immeasurable pain and deserve support.
- *The Expanding the Families of Veterans Access to Mental Health Services Act* would allow the families of veterans who die by suicide to receive grief counseling at Vet Centers, helping to uphold the solemn vow our country made to support those who serve and their families even after their service has ended.