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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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System Failing America's Wounded Warriors

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs (DAMA) held a hearing to review the progress made by the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) in implementing the Integrated Disability Evaluation System, or IDES. A servicemember is referred to IDES when their active duty status is questioned through either physical or mental injuries incurred on active duty. IDES was put in place upon the recommendations by several commissions—including the Dole Shalala Commission—in 2007 to better assist America's recovering warriors and their families' transition from active-duty to VA. Former commission members and DoD and VA officials testified before the Subcommittee.

“Issues with processing time remain problematic; some recovering warriors experience lengthy delays in their attempt to navigate through the IDES system, while others are rushed through without receiving the proper medical attention they need,” stated Rep. Jon Runyan, Chairman of the DAMA Subcommittee. “In addition, warriors report they find the system to be confusing and difficult to navigate. We need to ensure that the system is working for them, and not the other way around. That means ensuring our recovering warriors are part of the decision-making process that embodies what is best for themselves, their families, and their futures.”

IDES replaced the former DES (Disability Evaluation System), and is currently being utilized at 139 DoD and VA locations, but the goal of full implementation of the system was missed this past year.

“Pilot programs were able to take the legacy process of 500 days down to 300, but as the system was expanded—the waiting time climbed back to 500 days,” testified Mr. Kenneth Fisher, a member of Dole Shalala Commission and CEO of the Fisher House Foundation. “I sincerely hope that the testimony this morning will help give these men and women the system they deserve.”

Members of the Committee expressed the need for DoD and VA to continually re-evaluate and adjust IDES to better serve those who have been wounded in defense of our nation, including achieving transparency, improving consistency, and eliminating duplicative processes between the two departments.

“As a new generation of active-duty men and women return home from conflicts overseas, we must be prepared to meet our commitment to see that their transition to veteran status is as efficient and simple as possible,” Runyan said. “It is our duty to see that their service is honored through proper care.”

Retweatables:

RT @HouseVetAffairs: Subcommittee meets to fix roadblocks hindering #woundedwarriors as they transition to #vets

RT@HouseVetAffairs: #woundedwarriors deserve a seamless transition to #vet through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System

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