



*News From The ...*

## **COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 2, 2011**

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### **Veteran Suicide Remains High Despite Increased Support**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**— Today, the Subcommittee on Health held a hearing entitled, “Understanding and Preventing Veteran Suicide,” to track the progress being made to prevent suicide and steps taken to identify at risk servicemembers and veterans by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. Despite increased resources and services, significant obstacles remain including limits on data, stigma, access issues, and a lack of partnership with community care providers.

“The statistics are sobering—18 veterans commit suicide each day with almost a third receiving care from the Department of Veterans Affairs at the time of their death,” stated Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle, Subcommittee Chairwoman on Health. “Each month, there are 950 veterans being treated by VA who attempt suicide. What’s more, data from the Department of Defense indicate servicemembers took their lives at an approximate rate of one every 36 hours from 2005 to 2010.”

Testimony was heard today on recently released reports from the RAND Corporation “[Veterans Health Administration Mental Health Program Evaluation](#)” and the Center for a New American Security, “[Losing the Battle: The Challenge of Military Suicide](#).”

As stated in the Center for a New American Security report, “The health and survival of service members hinges on the removal of the stigma associated with mental health care. This stigma exists in both military and civilian culture.” According to RAND, “The size of the veteran population with mental health and substance use disorders is likely to increase as military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan decrease in size and service members leave the armed forces. Given the clinical complexity and high costs associated with these disorders, identifying ways to increase efficiency while improving quality is paramount. Moreover, even though the VA performed as well as or better than the private sector on quality measures where comparable data were available, there is room for improvement.”

Steps recently taken by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, including the National Veterans Crisis Line and suicide prevention campaigns, have shown some improvement, but outreach to at risk veterans is still the biggest obstacle to reaching those most in need.

“We must do more to reach out to veterans inside and outside of the VA and DoD health care systems to ensure that all those who need it get the help they earned and deserve before time runs out,” said Buerkle. “Until a family no longer bears the pain of losing a loved one, we are failing and not enough is being done.”

***Retweetables:***

***RT @HouseVetAffairs: Not enough being done to combat #vet suicide. Must ensure #VA reaches out to at risk #vets: <http://veterans.house.gov/>.***

***RT @HouseVetAffairs: #Vets in need, please reach out to your local #VA to get assistance or call (800) 273-8255, press 1.***

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