

Memorandum in Support

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS

Veterans #2

March 3, 2020

S. 6712
A. 8602

By: Senator Metzger
By: M. of A. Gunther

Senate Committee: Finance
Assembly Committee: Governmental Operations
Effective Date: Immediately

AN ACT to amend the executive law, in relation to establishing September twenty-second of each year as a day of commemoration known as “Veteran Suicide Awareness and Remembrance Day.”

LAW & SECTION REFERRED TO: Section 168-a of the executive law.

THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS **SUPPORTS THIS LEGISLATION**

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”), we have lost over 100,000 Veterans to suicide since 2001 and we are still losing over 20 a day. That is 7,300 veterans lost in one year, more than all the casualties from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined since 2001. Further, since 2012, more veterans have died by suicide than service members in combat. Over the 13 years covered in a 2016 VA report, the country has lost an estimated 94,900 veterans to suicide. A Government Accountability Office study concluded the VA spent only \$57,000 of a \$6.2 million dollar allotment for suicide prevention media outreach for fiscal year 2018. The VA spent less than 1% of its allotment. This clearly shows a failure in fighting the epidemic of veteran suicides.

Currently September is Suicide Awareness month, but with an epidemic in the veteran community of suicide there is no day to bring awareness and to honor the fallen. These victims to suicide and their families are ignored and forgotten by our country, until now. New York State has the opportunity to be at the forefront of veteran suicide awareness by designating September 22 as a day of awareness and remembrance. New York State is home to 13 military bases, 66 VA locations, and the sixth largest population of veterans in the country. This population encompasses men and women of Vietnam, Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, and non-combat service.

By creating an annual observance, we recognize and remember those veterans lost, elevate this issue in the public consciousness and bring attention to the need to work on prevention. On that day we can honor our fallen veterans and their families, and forever remember their service to our great nation.

The NYSBA's Committee on Veterans fully **SUPPORTS** this legislation as a vital aspect to combating this epidemic in our community.