



LEGISLATIVE – February 2023

From The American Legion 2022 Legislative Agenda

WOMEN VETERANS

Women have voluntarily served in every war since the American Revolution. They have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with their male counterparts, filling roles critical to our country's national security. Today, women are the fastest growing demographic in the military and veteran community. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates an annual population increase of 0.6 percent for women veterans by 2045. VA must plan now to account for these demographic shifts and ensure that women veterans are provided high-quality care and resources. Barriers include not identifying as a veteran, not being recognized as a veteran by VA employees, lack of awareness and understanding of VA health-care benefits and perceptions that VA is an "all-male" health-care system. Other gender specific difficulties include women veterans being more likely to experience mental health issues and military sexual trauma, as well as chronic pain management and musculoskeletal condition treatment. To address these problems and barriers to care, VA must have care models and standards that are gender-specific and culturally competent. The Department of Defense has worked with VA to introduce the Women's Health Transition Training Program, to reach active-duty women who are transitioning out of military service, about VA to ensure a seamless transition and connect them with the resources they need. Moving forward, it is equally important to simultaneously oversee current programs and the implementation of past legislation impacting women veterans while also advocating for new legislation which fills the gaps remaining. This means improving mammography services, mitigating the cost of contraceptive care, and studying the need for women-specific drug and alcohol dependency rehabilitation programs, as well as others.

KEY POINTS

* The number of female veterans is also projected to increase from around 2 million in 2021 to approximately 2.2 million in 2046.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

- * Improve access to mammography services for women veterans. (S. 2533/H.R. 4794, the Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options – MAMMO – for Veterans Act)
- * Increase access to child-care services and newborn care at VA medical centers.
- * Support studies into inpatient women-veteran-specific alcohol and drug dependency rehabilitation programs. (H.R. 344, Women Veterans TRUST Act)
- * Provide timely oversight of legislation, which has been signed into law, that impacts women veterans.

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Mid-year report deadlines to District – December 1, 2022 * Deadline to Dept - December 15, 2022**

TBI/PTSD

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) poses specific challenges due to the symptoms that are also commonly associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This makes identifying the source of these symptoms a complicated task. TBI symptoms can exacerbate PTSD symptoms and vice versa. The most concerning TBI issue is the number of comorbidities that are common suicide risk factors. To address this issue, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) conducts TBI research through its Office of Research and Development and studies treatment at its Translational Research Center for TBI and Stress Disorders. VA is also at the forefront of TBI/PTSD research and treatment with its Brain Rehabilitation Research Center, War Related Illness and Injury Center, and Polytrauma/ TBI System of Care. The American Legion treats TBI as a priority through its TBI, PTSD and Suicide Prevention Committee, which was created by national resolution in 2015. More research must be done to provide high quality health care to veterans suffering from TBI and PTSD.

KEY POINTS

* TBI is a serious invisible wound of war that afflicts many Post 9/11 veterans; it has many symptoms in common with PTSD.

*When treating TBI and PTSD, a variety of comorbidities require consideration and treatment because of their contribution to suicide risk.

*The American Legion's TBI, PTSD and Suicide Prevention Committee encourages the advancement of research into the complex issues of those who have experienced TBI and PTSD, through new innovative care options.

WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

* Facilitate VA and Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to conduct innovative research.

* Provide oversight for VA and DoD initiatives which expand access to evidence-based complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) treatments for veterans suffering from TBI/PTSD.

* Pass legislation empowering veterans to choose treatments that work best for them to address their TBI/PTSD

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To a Veteran

Your sacrifice in the face of great danger, and the bravery that you showed will echo in the generations to come.

Your heroism has inspired me to do many things."

"Thank you for risking your life for my freedom."

"I am sending you a special valentine wish."



We all know California has the largest population of Veterans. Currently, Governor Newsom has seventeen veteran bills on his desk.

Nine - Assembly bills for mental health services, discharge services, educational benefits, Space Force, Title 38, Gold Star Families, Medical Foster Home Program.

Eight - Senate bills for vehicle licenses, California Central Coast State Veterans Cemetery, Military service, leave of absence pay & benefits, Sales & use taxes, Family Law, Veterans homes, Licenses, Military Service.

Are you still singing Michael Jackson's song "A B C, it's easy as 1, 2, 3"?

ONE – Open your iPhone, iPad or your PC!

TWO- Log on to Votervoice.net (the Legion's Grassroot center)

THREE- Sign-up for alerts and while you are there, look at Legislation.

Did you sign in, yet? Once you have, you'll get alerts, then just follow the easy instructions.

Don't be left at the station, hop onboard our "Friendship Train" and remember!

"A, B, C it's easy as 1, 2, 3!"

I would like to encourage each member to "Be a Voice for our Veterans!"

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