I wish to engage in a colloquy with the ranking member of

the Committee, but let me begin by thanking the gentleman from

Washington and Chairman Young for accommodating my request, for the

second year in a row, for an additional $20 million to be included in

the appropriations bill for suicide prevention and outreach programs.

The committee last year honored this request, and I think it's a

clear demonstration of the committee's intent that the Department do

more and more to end this epidemic of suicide among our Active-Duty,

Guard and Reserve force.

I do have a clarifying question I would like to pose to the gentleman

from Washington.

Is it the committee's intent that the $20 million in this legislation

in additional suicide prevention funds be made available for successful

suicide prevention programs, such as New Jersey's Vets4Warriors peer-

to-peer counseling and outreach program?

I thank the gentleman.

I would also like under general leave to insert in the Record a

letter from the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the

Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, and the Marine Corps League to

Secretary Panetta concerning this Vets4Warriors program.

In this letter, the five veteran service organizations note that of

all the suicide prevention programs and alternatives explored by the

Department, ``perhaps none have been more successful than the

Vets4Warriors program.''

I raise this letter, Mr. Chairman, because just this past week, the

National Academies of Science released a report on the DOD and the VA's

response to this explosion of PTSD cases and suicide-related mental

health problems for veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

We want to make sure that the successful programs are recognized; and

to date, no service member or veteran who has used these Vets4Warriors

or vet-to-vet program has taken his or her own life. They have been

successful.

One of the shortcomings in our government's approach to dealing with

the suicide epidemic among service members and veterans is the

assumption that only programs within the DOD and within the VA are

capable of dealing with this crisis. Our experience in New Jersey

strongly suggests otherwise, and I ask the gentleman from Washington

and the chair of the committee for their help in prodding the National

Academies and the government at large in evaluating the potential

positive role that community-based programs like Vets4Warriors can play

in helping defeat the suicide epidemic among our troops and veterans.

Reclaiming my time, I would reiterate my thanks to the

chairman and to the ranking member for the strong attention and

sensitive attention that they have given to this matter.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.