

From: Senator John Brooks Campaign Interns: Tairik Johnson and Zoe Huertas

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Re: Policies Helping in the Prevention of Veteran Suicide

Executive Summary: The Nassau County Veterans Service Agency is challenged with the mitigation of a veteran's suicide crisis that needs urgent attention. The Veterans Service Agency (VSA) faces suicide rates that entail the death of a veteran nearly every other day. Veterans protect our freedoms around the world and put their lives on the line time and again to shield us from the tragedy of death. In turn, we in Nassau County must protect our Veterans from the tragedy of suicide and give them the support they have rightfully earned. Nassau County must find economically reasonable resources and policies to help our Veterans live the satisfactory life they deserve.

Funding Resources for the Prevention of Veteran Suicide:

Whilst we want to serve as help to all veterans, resources come at a cost. It is crucial to find the right way to approach an economically friendly solution. We are on the right path because already, Senator John Brooks has prioritized Veterans life by securing state-wide funding for the Joseph Dwyer Program, a peer-to-peer counseling program for veterans with PTSD. Approaches made by other states may give ideas on how Nassau County can put money into the right causes. As an example, [Utah's HB 390](#) created a Suicide Prevention Education Program to fund suicide prevention activities by federally licensed retail firearms dealers that includes information on crisis intervention resources and how to identify persons who may be suicidal. Having these resources to ensure a healthy life to the people who have kept us safe.

Policy Options and Recommendations:

Veteran suicide-related deaths are increasing at a greater rate than that of the general U.S. population. There needs to be a change in the resources offered to the Veterans in order to decrease the statistics. Looking at steps other states have made in order to achieve the same goal will give an insight on what the next step The Nassau County Veterans Service Agency should take. As the chairman of the NY Senate Committee on Veterans, John has prioritized Veteran safety by working with a bipartisan group of legislators to create the Department of Veterans Services, the first-ever cabinet-level department in New York for veterans affairs.

Following beneficial approaches taken by other states will help find a common desirable resource.

Delaware, Kentucky, Texas, West Virginia and Wisconsin have set up [Green Alert](#) programs, in which Green Alert notifies the public when a veteran or military service member is missing who has a physical or mental health condition that could put them at imminent risk of self-harm. As new technology emerges, we are given access to these resources which could save many lives. Using workshops, building relationships and finding the right professionals to make Veterans feel satisfied with their life is another resource that may be used, as we have seen in other states.

The [New Hampshire](#) Gun Shop Project provides gun stores and firing ranges with suicide prevention materials tailored to their customers. On a similar approach of promoting gun safety, [Colorado's](#) designated firearm advocates visit members of the firearm community to promote temporary safe storage as a proven suicide prevention tool, since studies show that suicidal crises are often brief, usually less than one day. Thus, temporarily keeping lethal means away from a person in crisis saves lives.

Most importantly, prioritizing mental health is crucial in the process of suicide prevention. Raising awareness of suicide prevention can help us understand the event and circumstances that lead to mental health issues. The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs is a lead agency within Alabama's Challenge and assists with connecting with SMVF to provide information and knowledge about suicide, provide support, and provide resources and options to deal with PTSD and crisis situations. Additionally, [Washington](#) passed HB 15-1424 in 2018 requiring all medical health professionals to undergo suicide prevention training specific to veterans and HB 18-6514, which requires higher education professionals to receive training for identifying and intervening with student veterans at risk of suicide. Bringing attention to the care that is needed to prevent Veteran suicide is the first step in the right direction.

Senator John Brooks prioritizes the lives of Veterans and will take these recommendations into deep consideration for how Nassau County can be of help to Veterans. It is heartwarming to see the collection of states making a change to ensure the community of Veterans that have fought for America continue to live a fulfilling and safe life.