

**MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE
HEART OF THE U.S.A.**



**THE ONLY CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED VETERANS ORGANIZATION
EXCLUSIVELY FOR COMBAT-WOUNDED VETERANS**

STATEMENT OF
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NATIONAL COMMANDER

BEFORE A JOINT HEARING OF THE
SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEES ON VETERANS
AFFAIRS

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Chairman Moran, Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Blumenthal & Ranking Member Takano, distinguished members of the Veteran Affairs Committee, and esteemed leaders, I am honored and humbled to represent America's Purple Heart Veterans in addressing you today. I would like to begin by congratulating all new members of Congress and expressing my gratitude to those who have returned to serve and enhance the quality of life for our nation's veterans. With our collective efforts, I am confident that the 119th Congress will make significant strides in supporting our nation's heroes.

The 118th Congress passed pivotal legislation, such as the VA Accountability Act, PACT Act and COMPACT Act, which have made substantial improvements in various aspects of American Veterans' lives. This foundation will undoubtedly guide our progress during the 119th Congress.

Our nation's veterans answered the call to protect us from the darkest threats the world has to offer. We implore this committee and the rest of Congress to consider passing further legislation that addresses the present needs of our veterans. We The Military Order of the Purple Heart ask for your support of the following:

First, let's address the Military Medals Protection Act. George Washington established the Badge of Military Merit, the precursor to today's Purple Heart, recognizing the profound significance of military honors. This act grants the Department of Defense exclusive trademark authority over all military medals, safeguarding them from exploitation and preserving their symbolic value.

Commercializing or misusing these symbols diminishes their essence. The 113th Congress recognized this sacredness when they passed the Stolen Valor Act. Now, let's collaborate to expand their protections and restore all

trade and word marks to the DOD, managed by the Institute of Heraldry, ensuring their unimpaired safeguarding.

Second, let's address the National Green Alert Act. The Green Alert Act H.R. 175-2017 aims to create a specialized alert system for missing veterans. The proposed system would leverage the success of existing alert systems like AMBER and Silver Alerts, which have demonstrated high recovery rates. The Green Alert system would provide critical response tools, enable specialized response, and include a public education component to address the unique challenges faced by veterans in crisis.

Third, The Healthy Heroes Act. Addresses veteran's healthcare crises including mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness. This act introduces changes to VA healthcare by embracing alternative treatments, holistic approaches, and comprehensive mental health services. The Military Order of the Purple Heart also requests congress to expand VA dental care qualifications for all veterans.

Finally, the Fulfilling the Legacy Act seeks to rectify a systemic failure that has been affecting veterans' financial security. Consider the story of a 92-year-old Purple Heart recipient who diligently paid Survivor Benefit Plan premiums for decades, only to lose \$50,000 in premiums when his wife passed away. This is not an isolated incident but a clear indication of the need for action. This act modernizes the Survivors Benefit Plan, ensuring that veterans' investments in their families' futures are protected. Military retirees have already met all the requirements to earn their healthcare benefits.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart opposes any changes to Tricare For Life and VA Disability Benefits that would increase fees and shift costs from the Department of Defense (DoD) to retirees over 65 years of age who rely on Tricare For Life and those who rely on VA Disability compensation. The cost of this inaction extends beyond monetary losses; it involves the loss of lives, shattered

families, and broken promises. Each day, 44 families tragically lose a veteran to suicide due to our delay. Every night, 33,000 veterans who valiantly defended our nation find themselves sleeping on our streets. On top of that countless military families face financial insecurity due to outdated benefit systems. Continuing to allow companies to profit while penalizing the nation's heroes who earned these benefits diminishes the sacrifices made by America's warriors. These four acts that the Military Order of the Purple Heart present are more than mere policy changes; they embody our sacred moral obligation to those who have served.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart have proposed these acts for American Veterans in their healthcare to secure their families' futures. Each piece of legislation addresses critical gaps in our support for veterans. George Washington rightly recognized the importance of honoring those who served under him, we too must recognize our duty to today's veterans. The 119th Congress holds the opportunity to transform how America cares for its heroes.

Let us set aside partisan politics and focus on the issue at hand. The Military Order of the Purple Heart is seeking your support and collaboration on the presented acts.