



Vietnam Veterans of America

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A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

October 18, 2021

The Honorable Maria Salazar
United States House of Representatives
1616 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Salazar:

On behalf of Vietnam Veterans of America, our Board of Directors, and our members, I am writing in support of your proposed legislation, *Supporting Every at-risk Veteran In Critical Emergencies Act of 2021*, which authorizes a pilot program through the Department of Justice to provide grants to state, local, and tribal governments for the creation, training, and operation of veteran response teams within law enforcement.

The invisible wounds of war—e.g., Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury--often contribute to relationship difficulties, social isolation, poor impulse control, behaviors such as drug/alcohol abuse, and anger-management challenges. All too often, veterans who have survived combat and have trouble readjusting to civilian life find themselves in conflict with the law. Their unexplained, volatile hostile actions provoke a defensive response from law enforcement, often resulting in the loss of life.

Former servicemembers, who make up one percent of the population, account for twenty percent of all suicides in the United States. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, one veteran dies by his or her own hand every eighty minutes, and since 2001, more veterans have died by suicide than in the combined casualty rolls in the war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Congresswoman Salazar, Vietnam Veterans of America fully supports the *Supporting Every at-Risk Veteran In Critical Emergencies Act of 2021*. We know from experience that a veteran is more likely to respond to a fellow veteran in time of crisis. A Veteran Response Team trained in mental health would arm the judicial system with a mechanism to intervene on behalf of the veteran struggling with readjustment to civilian life, and most important, it will save lives.

And following the de-escalation of the volatile situations, the Veteran Response Team would be able to connect the struggling veteran with local resources needed for the treatment of their invisible wounds of war and their adjustment to life as a civilian.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Rowan".

John Rowan
National President