

## Wounded Warrior Project Presents 2014 Veterans Policy Objectives to Senate, House Veterans Affairs Committees

### **Policy Priorities Look to Close Gaps Between Legislation and Implementation**

Washington, DC (March 12, 2014) – Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) unveiled its 2014 policy priorities today, aimed at meeting unfulfilled obligations to the nation's newest wounded veterans, during testimony before the Committees on Veterans Affairs for the Senate and the House of Representatives.

In testimony before a joint session of both committees, Anthony K. Odierno, a member of WWP's board of directors and himself an injured veteran, acknowledged the support of Congress and the progress made by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). However, he emphasized there are still wide gaps between legislation passed by Congress and the on-the-ground experience of veterans who need the intended services.

"Your committees have a strong record of legislative accomplishment," testified Odierno, who lost his left arm while serving in Iraq in 2004. "But there's still hard work ahead to make the promise of those laws a reality."

Odierno outlined four key areas where VA and Congress must act in 2014 to remedy longstanding problems that compromise the care and support owed to our injured veterans:

- Implement a nearly two-year-old law aimed at improving long-term rehabilitative services and maximizing independence for veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- Ensure, through a range of needed actions, that timely, effective mental health care becomes the norm at all VA facilities.
- Reduce caseloads and improve training for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service case workers to transform VR&E into a program that supports the career and educational aspirations of our veterans instead of being purely a jobs program.
- Fully implement the 2010 Caregiver Assistance law by revising overly restrictive determination criteria; setting clear, consistent standards for clinical decision-making; and providing meaningful appeal rights to review denials of caregiver assistance.

While emphasizing these issues, Odierno testified that WWP would continue advocating for continued improvement across the spectrum of veterans issues including improving VA's provisions concerning care related to military sexual trauma; providing greater and consistent access to non-pharmacological services to manage acute and chronic pain; ensuring that VA prosthetics and prosthetics research are high priorities; and encouraging schools and universities to do more to support disabled veterans.

During his testimony, Odierno highlighted the results of WWP's annual survey, the most statistically significant data available on service members injured since 9/11, as well as recent survey results from caregivers to illustrate the widespread challenges this generation of injured veterans face:

- 75% of respondents report experiencing PTSD and 44% report having TBI
- 34% of respondents reported not getting the health care they needed with 41% reporting inconsistency or lapses in treatment as the cause
- 25% of respondents reported needing more than 40 hours of care or attendance by another person per week
- 40% of caregiver respondents said their request for VA assistance was denied with no explanation
- 17.8% of our respondents remain unemployed

Odierno stressed that, despite these continued challenges, WWP remains committed to working with Congress and VA to address the needs of America's newest veterans.

"We look forward to working with the Committees to realize the changes needed to help our wounded warriors achieve the goals to which we all aspire," said Odierno.

### **About Wounded Warrior Project**

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers — helping them achieve their highest ambition. [Learn more](#).

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