

# Wounded Warrior Project® Applauds Passage of Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act

## H.R. 203 Sent to the President Today

Washington, D.C. (February 3, 2015) - The Senate today unanimously passed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act (SAV Act), by a vote of 99-0. The SAV Act combats the scourge of mental health injuries - the invisible wounds of war - that face this generation of injured veterans, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

We are particularly encouraged to see provisions in the SAV Act that improve mental health care and services and suicide prevention programs at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD) in several ways. Among its provisions, the bill would: authorize VA to conduct a student loan repayment pilot program aimed at recruiting and retaining psychiatrists, and establish a peer support and community outreach pilot program to assist transitioning service members with accessing VA mental health care services.

"While VA has made efforts to identify and treat mental health issues through several initiatives, we know that many veterans with mental health conditions are still not receiving the care they need and have earned," said Charlie Abell, executive vice president of Policy and Government Affairs at WWP. "Removing the barriers that lead warriors to drop out of therapy is critical to reversing the heartbreaking rise of suicides among veterans."

Since 2010, WWP has been using the information gathered from its [Annual Alumni Survey](#) to refine its existing programs, develop new initiatives, and identify gaps in existing [veteran services](#) and support. This year's data again showed that mental health conditions were among the most frequently reported health problems of Alumni: 75 percent reported experiencing PTSD, 67 percent reported depression, and 64 percent reported experiencing anxiety. Forty-three percent of Alumni reported experiencing a TBI. Overall, the survey results indicate that, for many, the effects of mental and emotional health problems can be even more serious than the effects of physical problems.

WWP has seen the success that [warrior mentors](#) and community outreach can have through our Peer Support Program and Peer-Facilitated Support Groups, and we know that in many cases, it takes a veteran to help a veteran. The provision that would establish a peer support and community outreach pilot program to assist transitioning service members with accessing VA mental health care services is particularly encouraging in light of a survey finding that showed 59 percent of respondents identified talking with another OEF/OIF veteran as a top resource for coping with stress.

"We applaud Chairman Jeff Miller (R-FL), Congressman Tim Walz (D-MN), and Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) for introducing this important piece of legislation in the House, and for Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Blumenthal's leadership of the bill in the Senate. These Members have demonstrated outstanding leadership on this critical issue for injured servicemen and women," Abell said. "The provisions of the Clay Hunt SAV Act will serve injured servicemen and women well as they battle their invisible wounds now and in the future. We thank the Congress for sending this bill to the President and look forward to him quickly signing it into law."

## **Wounded Warrior Project**

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has a vision of fostering the most successful, well-adjusted generation of wounded service members in our nation's history. To achieve this objective, WWP is committed to a lifetime of service and commitment through its mission: to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP currently serves more than 63,000 warriors and over 9,000 family members through its 20 unique programs and services. The purpose of WWP is to raise awareness and to enlist the public's aid for the needs of injured service members, to help injured servicemen and women aid and assist each other, and to provide unique, direct programs and services to meet their needs. WWP is a national organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and learn more, visit [www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org).

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