

Senator Patty Murray Introduces The Women Veterans and Families Health Services Act of 2015 **Bill Advances Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) Policy Priority**

Washington, D.C. (February 11, 2015) – Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) today introduced the Women Veterans and Families Health Services Act of 2015, a bill that would expand the treatment and care at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); provide fertility treatment for spouses of severely wounded veterans; provide adoption assistance for veteran families; and make permanent a veterans child care services pilot program at VA. Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is proud to support this bill.

“We thank Senator Murray for her leadership in recognizing the devastating toll that service-incurred injuries can have on a warrior or spouse’s ability to start a family,” said Charlie Abell, executive vice president of Policy and Government Affairs at WWP. “In our decade-long experience working daily with this generation of wounded warriors, we know there is a need to provide reproductive services and adoption assistance to assist in helping severely wounded, ill, or injured veterans with fertility conditions to have families.”

Blasts from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted not only in traumatic physical wounds such as amputations, pelvic, abdominal, or urogenital wounds, but also in invisible wounds such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression – injuries that have increased in number and severity over the course of these wars. The Department of Defense (DoD) has acknowledged the impact of these injuries on warriors and family members’ psychological and reproductive health, and adopted a policy that authorizes and provides implementation guidance on assisted reproductive services for seriously injured active duty service members. DoD’s policy covers assistive reproductive technologies to help reduce the disabling effects of the service member’s condition to permit procreation with the service member’s spouse.

However, VA’s coverage for service-incurred reproductive injuries is extremely limited. In fact, VA is currently prohibited by law from providing in vitro fertilization (IVF), as the regulation describing the scope of VA’s medical benefits states that care will be provided only as needed to promote, preserve, or restore the health of the individual.

“To truly honor and empower wounded warriors, we must go beyond merely restoring the health of the individual – we need to look at the impact that having a family can have on veterans’ long-term quality of life,” Abell said. “We urge the Senator’s colleagues to support and enact this legislation and we look forward to working with Senator Murray and Congress to see these provisions enacted 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