

Injured Veterans and Their Families Advocate for Hope

Wounded Warrior Project Takes Group to Meet with Congress

WASHINGTON, June 21, 2016 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- According to the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, Thomas Jefferson wrote to Dr. Hosea Humphrey about advances in science and medicine on June 15, 1816. Fast-forward 200 years and advances in medicine are making it possible for veterans who suffered catastrophic injuries to start families. They just need a little help from Congress.

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) brought families to Capitol Hill last week including Wednesday, June 15, 2016, to meet with congressional delegates. Those meetings helped explain the importance of passing a measure to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to cover in vitro fertilization (IVF) and other reproductive services.

"I lost so many abilities, I lost so much, but no service member should lose the chance to start a family," Matt Keil said.

Matt is quadriplegic after an enemy sniper shot him through the neck in Iraq in 2007, severing Matt's spinal cord. He made the trip from Colorado with his wife, Tracy, to advocate for other warriors. Matt and Tracy already fought to cover their IVF procedure, relying on credit cards, a home mortgage, plus support from friends, family, and their community to pay for the treatment. Matt and Tracy are now the proud parents of 5-year-old twins.

"Having a family has been instrumental in Matt's recovery," Tracy said.

Meeting after meeting, Matt and Tracy shared their story with members of Congress and their staffers, hoping for support as Congress debates this important measure. The U.S. Senate already passed a bill that includes funding for the amendment. The U.S. House of Representatives' version of the bill does not yet include the provision.

"It is unconscionable that Congress stands in the way of these veterans starting a family," U.S. Representative Rick Larsen (D - District 2, Washington) said during a news conference outside the U.S. Capitol Building.

Congressman Larsen is among a growing number of lawmakers lining up to support the amendment first introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D - Washington).

WWP thinks the VA should be able to provide a benefit that is already made available to federal civilian employees. It is also provided in some instances to active duty military through the Department of Defense.

"It doesn't make a lot of sense that this bill is available all through your military career, but when you need it most, it is gone," U.S. Representative Martha Roby (R - District 2, Alabama) said during a meeting with the families.

"It shouldn't take an act of Congress for veterans to start a family," Christy Lynch said. Her husband, Jeff,

suffered a traumatic brain injury following explosions during two deployments in Iraq.

"To us, to feel normal is to have a family," Jeff said.

Jeff brought along his service dog, Woody, for the meetings. Woody drew a lot of attention from members of Congress and their staff because of his blue tie with white WWP logos on it.

For Jeff and Christy, Matt and Tracy, and so many other wounded veterans who have helped advocate for this right, it is not about them; it is about their brothers and sisters in arms who may be injured and face this same battle back home.

"We're not just here fighting for our rights, we're fighting for the rights of future service members," Jeff said.

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) is taking several avenues to advocate for this amendment. WWP launched an [online petition \(https://goo.gl/LSV2GI\)](https://goo.gl/LSV2GI) recently in hopes of sharing these signatures with Congress. WWP also invites you to call, email, or tweet to your congressional representative to share your support for the measure.

"This was the missing piece to my puzzle; having kids completed my family," Matt said.

Representative Larsen summed up the day: "To members of Congress who may oppose this amendment, I invite you to come down and meet these families, listen to their stories, look into their eyes."

About the Coalition of Partners

Wounded Warrior Project is part of a broad coalition working to enable disabled veterans to start families. The coalition consists of:

AMVETS
Blue Star Families
Bob Woodruff Foundation
Disabled American Veterans
Elizabeth Dole Foundation
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
Wounded Warrior Project
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Paralyzed Veterans of America
National Military Family Association
The Veterans Health Council
Quality of Life Foundation
Vietnam Veterans of America
Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)

About Wounded Warrior Project

The mission of Wounded Warrior Project® is to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP's purpose 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, nonpartisan organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida. To get involved and to learn more, visit <https://goo.gl/QYbvpg>.

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<https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/2016-06-21-Injured-Veterans-and-Their-Families-Advocate-for-Hope>