

WWP News & Media: Veteran Group Outings, Charity Events, Helping Vets

## Wounded Warrior Project Focuses Legislative Priorities for 2017

WASHINGTON, March 9, 2017 /[PRNewswire-USNewswire](#)/ -- In 2017 Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) plans to target key issues in Congress that will protect seriously injured veterans from financial burdens, extend a program serving warriors with traumatic brain injuries, and improve appeals processes for veteran benefits.

WWP Chief Executive Officer Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington took these priorities to the Joint Veterans Affairs Committee in Congress this morning.

WWP will continue pushing for increased collaboration between government and the nonprofit community. Partnerships like Warrior Care Network®, which includes four top academic medical centers, improve access to mental health care. WWP brought the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) into this arrangement to make it easier for veterans to transition between government and private mental health care. Partnerships with other veterans service organizations (VSOs) provide new and unique opportunities for warriors to connect with their communities. They also increase the reach into communities that may otherwise go underserved.

In 2017, WWP wants better care for the estimated 33,000 veterans who suffer from moderate to severe traumatic brain injury (TBI). In some cases, young men and women requiring long-term care are forced to live in geriatric nursing facilities. This is inappropriate for veterans in their 20s and 30s with long lives ahead of them, and current VA programs simply do not meet the needs of veterans suffering from TBI. As these veterans age, their TBIs will not necessarily improve. WWP believes these young veterans should be provided an environment to thrive.

WWP's Independence Program uses specialized case managers to work with severely wounded veterans – including those with TBI – and caregivers to develop individualized plans for recovery. Each plan may include increasing physical therapy, connecting each wounded warrior with his or her community, or finding programs to increase joy in the warrior's life. This program helps more than 600 warriors across the country and is one example of how organizations are filling the gap in care provided by the government. WWP looks to collaborate with VA and help enhance the programs it currently operates.

WWP aims to fix a rule that is unnecessarily costly to severely wounded veterans. These men and women are medically retired due to their injuries and are required to add Medicare coverage to their TRICARE because they are unable to work. This obligation inflates annual premiums for veterans who are limited in their ability to earn. If warriors are able to return to work, they still must maintain Medicare for up to eight and a half years before returning to traditional TRICARE coverage. WWP will work with Congress to find a solution allowing these veterans to maintain quality health care coverage without enormous financial strain.

In 2016, WWP prioritized reproductive services, pushing Congress to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to pay for in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment and other assistance for warriors who lost the ability to have children because of service-connected injuries. Congress passed a bill, the president signed it into law, and recently, VA implemented new rules that make the benefit a reality. While this provides hope for families, WWP wants to see this benefit continue beyond the current two-year authorization.

WWP has consistently pushed for improved support for caregivers of wounded veterans. While the Veterans and

Caregivers Omnibus Health Services Act provides stipends, expanded education and training, healthcare coverage, respite care, counseling, and support groups, WWP joins our partner VSOs in raising concerns about the resources and sustainability of the program.

Together, with the generous support of the American public, WWP will continue to provide free programs and services to wounded warriors, their family members, and caregivers. WWP's mission is the same today as it was when the organization was founded, to honor and empower Wounded Warriors. WWP is here to fill the gaps in service and take care of the warriors who raised their hands to step up on behalf of our great nation.

Learn more about policy efforts at <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/policy-government-affairs>.

### **About Wounded Warrior Project**

Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) connects, serves, and empowers wounded warriors. Read more at <https://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/>

SOURCE Wounded Warrior Project

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