

Wounded Warrior Project Calls for Improved Accessibility to VA Websites and Congressional Services

WASHINGTON, Sept. 13, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- As part of its ongoing advocacy efforts with our nation's leaders, today Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Health. WWP Legislative Affairs Director Jose Ramos spoke out on the issues facing warriors and their caregivers and what might be done to mitigate some of the challenges.

"When serving these warriors, Wounded Warrior Project has often found itself advocating for the critically injured and their caregivers, while communicating with the VA and congressional staff," Ramos said. "We believe this process can be improved by co-locating a congressional representative's district staff member within a VA Medical Center. Doing so would alleviate the need for multiple trips to different locations and provide a more holistic approach to address the needs of the most critically injured."

In addition to supporting *H.R. 5413, the Improving Access to Congressional Services Act of 2018*, Ramos spoke about WWP's support of the intent of *H.R. 6418, the VA Website Accessibility Act of 2018*, asking Congress to continue improving its monitoring of changes made to the VA website, which has adversely affected warriors with visual impairments or injuries.

"As VA introduces new technologies or modifies old systems, it must recognize the potential of inadvertently removing accessibility features that were once in place," Ramos said. "The VA must ensure that website developers follow industry-standard accessibility guidelines to ensure compatibility with screen-reading software utilized by individuals who are visually impaired. Additionally, as VA executes the implementation of the electronic health record management system, which will have a robust external facing platform, it must do so with thoughtful consideration of end users who may have visual or cognitive deficiencies."

WWP also gave its recommendation that any congressional report by the VA on this issue should include strategies and timelines for implementing fixes to the inaccessible portions of the VA website. Additionally, Congress should receive annual briefings to ensure the VA is moving towards Section 508 compliance.