

Wounded Warrior Project Urges Congress to Pass Comprehensive Veterans Agenda **Warriors On Capitol Hill This Week Advocating for Mental Health, Financial Wellness, and Access to Care**

WASHINGTON, March 6, 2024 [/PRNewswire/](#) -- Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington today called on Congress to pass a series of bills focusing on mental health, financial wellness, and access to care that would comprehensively address the needs and well-being of wounded veterans who served after 9/11.

Linnington's testimony before a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees came as wounded warriors from across the U.S. gathered this week in Washington, DC, to advance the legislation highlighted in his comments. The warriors will meet with nearly 100 Congressional offices, discussing their experiences and how the different bills will impact the veteran community.

"Veterans issues are closely linked, and we cannot adequately address them individually," said Linnington. "Alleviating financial stress and improving access to care enhances mental health and aids in preventing suicide — and vice versa. Congress must tackle these issues holistically and comprehensively to get at the roots of the challenges that post-9/11 warriors face every day."

Read WWP's full written [testimony](#) and the organization's [2024 legislative priorities](#).

Some of the specific challenges Linnington noted in his testimony include:

- **Access to care** (including gender-specific care and enhanced services for rural areas): While 70% of women warriors use VA medical centers, access to gender-specific care is a reported barrier. In addition, long distances, clinic hours, and availability of transportation dramatically affect access to care for veterans living in rural and hard-to-reach geographic areas.
- **Mental health and suicide prevention**: Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression are the top three service-related conditions reported by warriors. Yet, many veterans are waiting too long and experiencing too many challenges in accessing mental health and substance use disorder residential care and services.
- **Financial wellness**: Almost two-thirds of respondents to WWP's Annual Warrior Survey reported they could not make ends meet at some point over the past 12 months. New incentives and policies for the government and other employers to hire veterans are needed. Congress also should finally pass the Major Richard Star Act to ensure combat-injured warriors receive the full value of their military retirement and VA disability compensation benefits.

WWP will also continue to advocate for other veterans' issues as well, including ensuring that the PACT Act – toxic exposure legislation passed in 2022 that represents the largest expansion of VA benefits in a generation – continues to be implemented effectively. Strengthening long-term health care and support, providing additional resources to caregivers, and increasing support for rural veterans are additional priorities WWP will push for in 2024.

"For many warriors, our service did not end once we left the military," said Caroline Fermin, director of Veterans Affairs for Beaufort County in South Carolina, who served as a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps for 25 years and is participating in the fly-in. "So many of our brothers and sisters face challenges – from physical injuries to invisible wounds – that impact us every day, and we want to ensure that the voices of all warriors are heard. Congress hears from many organizations about many different issues, but our lawmakers need to ensure

our country makes good on the promises we make to our veterans."

WWP will continue to serve the post-9/11 generation of injured veterans and will work with elected leaders, policymakers, and the warrior community to support our nation's heroes.

About Wounded Warrior Project

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers — helping them achieve their highest ambition. [Learn more](#).

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