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SCR-65 Military and Veteran Suicide Prevention Awareness Week. (2017-2018)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 65

CHAPTER 180

Relative to veterans.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 22, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 65, Newman. Military and Veteran Suicide Prevention Awareness Week.

This measure would proclaim September 3, 2017, to September 9, 2017, inclusive, as Military and Veteran Suicide Prevention Awareness Week in California.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Suicide is a serious and tragic public health problem that can be prevented through increased awareness, resources, and proper treatment; and

WHEREAS, Suicide affects all Americans, but data shows that active duty service members and veterans die by suicide at much higher rates than the civilian population; and

WHEREAS, In the United States Department of Defense's (USDOD) "Quarterly Suicide Report" for the fourth quarter of 2016, the military services reported the following for all of 2016: 275 deaths by suicide for active military members; 203 deaths by suicide for military reserve members; and 123 deaths by suicide for members of the National Guard; and

WHEREAS, The Defense Suicide Prevention Office in the USDOD is working diligently to reduce these staggering numbers through an integrated, holistic approach to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention utilizing a range of medical and nonmedical resources; and

WHEREAS, In an effort to prevent suicides, the USDOD has recently launched a program entitled "Be There," offering confidential peer coaching to active duty service members, including National Guard active and reserve members and their families, using 24-hours-per-day, 7-days-per-week chat, telephone, and text options. The program is staffed by peer coaches who are veteran service members and family members of veterans and aims to provide support for everyday problem solving, such as career and general life challenges; and

WHEREAS, We must recognize that this tragic epidemic is taking the lives of those who have most heavily borne the burden of protecting and serving their country, in the past and present. In 2014, an average of 20 veterans died by suicide each day, and six of the 20 were users of United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) services; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, although veterans constituted just 8.5 percent of the United States population, they accounted for 18 percent of all deaths by suicide among United States adults; and

WHEREAS, There is continued evidence of a heightened tendency toward suicide among middle-aged and older adult veterans. In 2014, approximately 65 percent of all veterans who died by suicide were 50 years of age or older; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, after adjusting for differences in age and gender, risk of suicide was 21 percent higher among veterans when compared to United States civilian adults. For male veterans, the risk of suicide was 18 percent higher when compared to United States civilian adult males. For female veterans, risk of suicide was 2.4 times higher when compared to United States civilian adult females; and

WHEREAS, From 2001 to 2014, inclusive, the age-adjusted rate of suicide among United States civilian adults increased by 23 percent. In that same period, the suicide rate among United States veterans increased by 32.2 percent; and

WHEREAS, From 2001 to 2014, inclusive, the age-adjusted rate of suicide among United States civilian adult males increased by 0.3 percent. In that same period, the suicide rate among United States veteran males increased by 30.5 percent; and

WHEREAS, From 2001 to 2014, inclusive, the age-adjusted rate of suicide among United States civilian adult females increased by 39.7 percent. In that same period, the suicide rate among United States veteran females increased by 85.2 percent; and

WHEREAS, The VA has undertaken several measures to prevent suicide among veterans, including a 24-hours-per-day, seven-days-per-week veterans crisis telephone hotline, using predictive analytics to identify those at risk for suicide and providing early intervention services, bolstering mental health services for female veterans, expanding telemental health services, and proactively reaching out to veterans needing care; and

WHEREAS, This resolution endeavors to promote awareness of the problem of suicide and the particular epidemic facing the military population, and encourages active duty service members, veterans, service providers, advocates, and the people of the State of California to work together to continue to educate the public on how to recognize the warning signs and improve the outreach to, and treatment of, individuals at risk for suicide; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby proclaims September 3, 2017, to September 9, 2017, inclusive, as Military and Veteran Suicide Prevention Awareness Week in California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.