



# JEWISH WAR VETERANS of the United States of America

Veterans Helping Veterans Since 1896

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## Executive Summary of 2018 Legislative Priorities

### **Thank Congress for Naming VA Hospital after Tibor Rubin**

Jewish War Veterans of the USA greatly appreciates that Congress passed legislation naming the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system in Long Beach, California, the Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center.

### **Preserving VA Healthcare**

The Jewish War Veterans is opposed to bill **HR 4457**, and any bill that would dismantle the VA health care system, charge veterans for service-connected health care, and/or reduce the VA to an insurance program for veterans.

According to the RAND Corporation's study, published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine, 2016, which compared VA and non-VA quality of care, the VA's healthcare system provides generally better or equal care for TBI, PTSD, and other traumatic and serious medical conditions.

### **Providing Benefits to Blue Water Navy Veterans**

Jewish War Veterans of the USA supports the passage of **HR 299**, to provide the same presumptive VA benefits to those personnel who served off the coast of Vietnam as are provided to those who had "boots on the ground" in Vietnam. It is quite clear that those who served in the waters off Vietnam are deserving of VA benefits. Thousands of veterans who served in the territorial waters of Vietnam are now suffering from higher rates of disease, and other chronic health conditions, which can be attributed to exposure to Agent Orange.

### **Benefits to Care-Givers**

Jewish War Veterans of the USA supports **Caring for Our Veterans Act S 2193**, and calls upon the Congress to expand the eligibility of Post 9/11 caregiver benefits to caregivers of veterans severely disabled before September 11, 2001.

Disabled veterans depend on the quality care that family caregivers provide. Whether the veteran was disabled recently or pre-9/11, the need for quality care is the same. Caregivers provide the best quality of life outcomes our veterans deserve. Additionally, care giver support for all veterans would provide better care outcomes at a lower cost than if those being cared for at home had to be housed and cared for in VA or private care facilities.

### **Providing Service Dogs for Veterans**

Jewish War Veterans of the USA supports the **PAWS Act of 2017, HR 2327**, directs the VA to carry out a five-year pilot program under which it provides grants to eligible nonprofit organizations to provide service dogs to veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

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## **Pass the Deborah Sampson Act; S 681**

Jewish War Veterans of the USA strongly supports this act which would improve the benefits and services provided by the VA to women veterans. There are unique medical needs for women veterans which continue to be inadequately met by the VA. There is a pattern of lower quality and gaps in services for women veterans which leads to higher levels of morbidity and mortality. We call upon the Congress to require the VA to provide gender specific services, medications, vitamins, and prosthetics wherever and whenever appropriate.

## **Addressing the Shortage of Air Force Pilots**

Jewish War Veterans of the USA calls upon the Congress to address the problem of the acute shortage of Air Force pilots. The Air Force currently has a shortage of 2,000 pilots, and this shortage is expected to grow. Shortage of instructor pilots is also another concern.

One cause is Air Force pilot attrition. In exit surveys, pilots cite cultural issues affecting their quality of life and service time, including “dissatisfaction with excessive duties unrelated to flying and inability to maintain work-life balance.” Retention bonuses for Air Force pilots is also the lowest among all the service branches.

Another factor, from a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, said the sharp rise in airline hires reflects current industry expansion to meet growing passenger demand. A 2010 law that toughened hiring standards for airlines put a premium on the experience of military pilots. Pilots hired by airlines soon have compensation packages that far exceed what the military can offer. Aviators also know that the sooner they accept industry jobs, the sooner they set their seniority numbers for the airlines.

## **Toxic and Environmental Exposures**

Jewish War Veterans of the USA believes that veterans and their families should be compensated for injury or illness caused by chemical and environmental hazards they become exposed to during their military service. Exposure to asbestos from burning buildings in Iraq, contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune, toxic burn pits, ionizing radiation, mustard gas, and Project 112—chemical tests conducted at Ft. Douglas, Utah, are some of the hazards for which exposed veterans should receive disability benefits.

## **Oppose Reduction in VA Disability Payments**

Jewish War Veterans of the USA is strongly opposed to any reduction in payments of VA disability compensation due to the veteran receiving payments of Social Security disability insurance or any other federal benefit. JWV believes these federal benefits are earned separately and that disabled veterans fully deserve each payment separately.