



## ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES

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**Washington, D.C.** - Today, the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) is proud to support *The Vet Center Eligibility Expansion Act*. Suicide is an epidemic plaguing the National Guard; according to the Department of Veterans Affairs data approximately 4 members of the Reserve Component who have never deployed on Title 10 orders are lost every day to suicide. Frank Yoakum, the Executive Director for EANGUS said, "We applaud Congressmen Phil Roe and Mike Levin for seeking to expand Vet Center access to National Guard and Reserve members who might be considering suicide as a final option. This expanded eligibility is a great step toward reaching our Members who have served their State and country and are in need of someone to talk to as they consider one of life's biggest decisions."

Since the attack on September 11<sup>th</sup> the National Guard has been on more than 850,000 deployments: the most in an 18-year time span in our country's history. In addition to missions abroad, the Guard has also been called upon for crises at home, responding to over 200 emergencies. Yet, despite the increased use, there has not been an increase in support. *The Vet Center Eligibility Expansion Act* aims to fix that by expanding eligibility for mental health treatment at Vet Centers for all members of the National Guard who have served domestically bravely facing emergencies in their own backyard.

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States applauds, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Congressman Roe for introducing this vital piece of legislation. EANGUS also thanks Congressman Mike Levin for joining Congressman Roe in bringing this vital bill forward. Congressman Roe pointed out that, "By allowing members of the National Guard, Reserve, and Coast Guard who are not currently eligible to access care at Vet Centers, we can rest assured that all those who serve in response to an emergency at the national, state, or local level are able to access the counseling, services, and support that they need and come one step closer to eliminating suicide among these brave men and women."

We are proud that, through the work of the members of EANGUS and the National Office in DC, we were able to help bring this important issue to light. EANGUS calls upon the rest of Congress to follow Congressman Roe's lead to provide care and support for all Veterans, both active and reserve. EANGUS works to advance the interests of over a million Soldiers, Airmen, their families, retirees, and survivors. Reflecting the spirit of America in over 3,000 communities across the nation, the men and women of the National Guard serve to defend their nation from threats abroad as well as to respond to natural and manmade disasters in their home state.

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