



JWV's 2020 Legislative Priorities

Helping Homeless Veterans

JWV calls on the U.S. Congress to pass H.R. 2223, the Helping Homeless Veterans Act of 2019.

-It would make permanent several programs that provide transitional housing, employment assistance, and supportive services

-It provides for \$50 million for each fiscal year after 2020 for homeless veterans reintegration programs.

-It provides \$380 million for each fiscal year after 2019 in financial assistance for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing.

-HUD's 2019 Homeless Assessment Report indicates the total number of reported veterans experiencing homelessness in 2019 decreased 2.1 percent, but nearly 40,000 veterans are still living on the streets.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2223?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22H.R.+2223%22%5D%7D&s=1&r=1>

Suicide Prevention

The Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America urges Congress to pass H.R. 3495, the Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act with the amendment proposed by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mark Takano.

-“By allowing VA to responsibly partner with the community organizations already serving veterans, we can protect VA's expertise in providing clinical care and begin to reach the 60 percent of veterans not using VA healthcare.”

-Services covered by this grant program include, educating families on suicide risks and prevention, peer support, everyday support, and safety planning.

-On average, 17 veterans take their own lives every day. A 2017 IG report found the average wait time for a mental health counselor was 26 days.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3495?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22H.R.+3495%22%5D%7D&s=2&r=1>

Burn Pits

The Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America urges Congress to pass H.R. 663 and S. 191, the Burn Pit Registry Act.

-It requires the Department of Defense (DOD) to evaluate all members of the Armed Forces to determine if they served in a location where an open burn pit was used to dispose of waste or if they were exposed to toxic airborne chemicals.

-It calls for periodic health assessments and results which must be shared with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

-Military.com reports that 12,000 claims were filed to the VA about burn pits, but so far only 2,500 of the claims were accepted. The VA “has emphasized the need for clear scientific links between war zone exposure and illnesses later in life before making large-scale benefits decisions.” Rep. Raul Ruiz said in a press conference in March of 2019 that a study for this illness could take up to 20 years, and “we don't have the time for that.” He said there are veterans who are dying already, and since there is enough evidence to determine there is a “high enough suspicion for a link... we have to act on that suspicion.”

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/663?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22H.R.+663%22%5D%7D&s=3&r=1>

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/191?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22S.+191%22%5D%7D&s=4&r=1>

Defining JWV Membership

In July 2019, the Legion Act, S.504, became a law. It allowed the American Legion to extend the privilege of membership “to all military personnel who served on active military duty during all of the unrecognized war eras involving active United States military personnel. As the Jewish War Veterans is also a veteran service organization chartered by Congress, we ask for lawmakers to sponsor a similar piece of legislation to allow JWV to define the scope of its membership in a similar manner.

POW/MIA Accountability

The Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America urges Congress to provide adequate funding to support the greatest possible accounting of missing service members and the repatriation of all recoverable remains. JWV remains a strong advocate for the return of all those missing in action and prisoners of war. JWV is pleased to see the reparation of those missing in Vietnam, as well as those from the Korean War and even from WWII. It’s important that as many families as possible have closure.

Support for Israel

The Jewish War Veterans urges Congress to support \$3.3 billion in security assistance to Israel and \$500 million in joint U.S.-Israel missile defense funding in fiscal year 2021, as called for in the 2016 U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding on security assistance. A robust foreign aid budget is an essential element of America’s national security strategy.