

Bost Introduces Bill To Strengthen VA Mental Health And Suicide Prevention Programs

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Representative Mike Bost (IL-12) today introduced the *Supporting the Resilience of Our Nation’s Great Veterans Act of 2022* or the **STRONG Veterans Act**. This legislation gives the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) important new authorities and resources to support veterans’ mental health and well-being through increased training, outreach, mental health care delivery, and research. This package of legislation, developed by House and Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Members in consultation with Veterans Service Organizations, is based on 22 bipartisan bills that will build upon the success of the *Veterans’ COMPACT Act* and *Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Healthcare Improvement Act* that was signed into law last Congress.

“The sluggish recovery from COVID-19, the failed withdrawal from Afghanistan, and our struggling economy have taken a toll on the mental health of all Americans, including our servicemembers and veterans,” said Bost. “As its name suggests, this bill includes a number of bipartisan, bicameral proposals to strengthen VA’s mental health and suicide prevention programs to save lives. It will help more veterans and military families get the help they need, when and where they need it.”

Among other provisions, the STRONG Veterans Act will:

- Open eligibility for more student veterans at Vet Centers
- Expand culturally competent suicide prevention at VA for native veterans
- Significantly increase mental health staffing and training at VA medical centers and Vet Centers
- Further strengthen the Veterans Crisis Line
- Allow more veterans to benefit from engaging with peer specialists
- Collect data for VA to guide expansion of inpatient mental health and substance use treatment