

1 HOUSE BILL NO. 117

2 INTRODUCED BY J. WINDY BOY

3 BY REQUEST OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS INTERIM COMMITTEE

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5 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION FOR GRANTS TO LOCAL
6 ENTITIES FOR EVIDENCE-BASED VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTIVITIES; AMENDING SECTION
7 53-21-1101, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."
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9 WHEREAS, the State Administration and Veterans' Affairs Interim Committee examined the high rate of
10 suicide among veterans in Montana, which is consistently one of the highest rates nationally, and that of the 555
11 suicides in Montana between January 1, 2014, and March 1, 2016, 121 were by veterans; and

12 WHEREAS, the committee learned about the need to address this issue through the efforts of local
13 entities who connect individually with veterans and their families; and

14 WHEREAS, the committee voted unanimously to recommend a committee bill to provide funding for
15 grants for local efforts to prevent veteran suicides in Montana.

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17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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19 **SECTION 1. SECTION 53-21-1101, MCA, IS AMENDED TO READ:**

20 **"53-21-1101. Suicide prevention officer -- duties.** (1) The department of public health and human
21 services shall implement a suicide prevention program by January 1, 2008. The program must be administered
22 by a suicide prevention officer attached to the office of the director of the department.

23 (2) The suicide prevention officer shall:

24 (a) coordinate all suicide prevention activities being conducted by the department, including activities
25 in the addictive and mental disorders division, the health resources division, and the public health and safety
26 division, and coordinate with any suicide prevention activities that are conducted by other state agencies,
27 including the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the department of corrections, the department of
28 military affairs, and the university system;

29 (b) develop a biennial suicide reduction plan that addresses reducing suicides by Montanans of all ages;

30 (c) direct a statewide suicide prevention program with evidence-based activities that include but are not

1 limited to:

2 (i) conducting statewide public awareness campaigns utilizing both paid and free media and including
3 input from government agencies, school representatives from elementary schools through higher education,
4 mental health advocacy groups, and other relevant nonprofit organizations;

5 (ii) initiating, in partnership with Montana's tribes and tribal organizations, a public awareness program
6 that is culturally appropriate and that utilizes the modalities best suited for Indian country;

7 (iii) seeking opportunities for research that will improve understanding of suicide in Montana and provide
8 increased suicide-related services;

9 (iv) training for medical professionals, military personnel, school personnel, social service providers, and
10 the general public on recognizing the early warning signs of suicidality, depression, and other mental illnesses;
11 and

12 (v) providing grants to communities or other government, nonprofit, or tribal entities to start new or
13 sustain existing evidence-based suicide prevention activities."

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15 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Appropriation.** There is appropriated \$500,000 from the general fund to
16 the department of public health and human services FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2019, to be used by the
17 state suicide prevention officer for grants under 53-21-1101(2)(v) to local entities for the prevention of suicides
18 by Montana veterans, including American Indian veterans.

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20 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Notification to tribal governments.** The secretary of state shall send a
21 copy of [this act] to each tribal government located on the seven Montana reservations and to the Little Shell
22 Chippewa tribe.

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24 **NEW SECTION. Section 4. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2017.

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