

No. R-141. House concurrent resolution designating April 2019 as Veterans Suicide Awareness Month in Vermont.

(H.C.R.115)

Offered by: Representatives Strong of Albany, Austin of Colchester, Brennan of Colchester, Chase of Colchester, Gamache of Swanton, Hango of Berkshire, Higley of Lowell, Howard of Rutland City, Killacky of South Burlington, Morrissey of Bennington, Sabilia of Dover, Stevens of Waterbury, Szott of Barnard, Taylor of Colchester, Troiano of Stannard, and Walz of Barre City

Whereas, our nation's veterans encounter many readjustment challenges upon their reentry into civilian life, and too frequently they result in suicide, and

Whereas, although age and regional variants exist, veterans are undeniably more susceptible to suicide than the adult nonveteran U.S. population, and

Whereas, according to a September 2017 media release from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the most recent data indicate that after adjustments for age and gender, the risk of suicide among veterans is 22 percent higher than that of U.S. nonveteran adults, and

Whereas, the Veterans Crisis Line reports that the suicide rate for younger military veterans who are between 18 and 34 years of age has been steadily increasing in recent years, rising ten percent from 2015 to 2016 alone, and

Whereas, more than half of the members of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America organization are acquainted with a military serviceperson who has committed suicide, and

Whereas, these statistics paint a tragic picture that emphasizes the need to focus more intensively on this situation, and

Whereas, one Vermonter who is making a personal effort to help lower the veterans' suicide rate is Valerie Pallotta, whose son Josh was a veteran who succumbed to suicide, and

Whereas, she is fundraising to establish Josh's House VT, in her son's memory, as a support facility to help veterans who have suicidal inclinations, and

Whereas, the designation of a month for Vermonters to pay focused attention to our State's and nation's veterans who may be considering suicide will heighten public sensitivity to this continuing societal issue, and

Whereas, today, April 2, 2019, would have been Josh Pallotta's 30th birthday, and

Whereas, it is fitting on this occasion to honor the valiant service of our veterans on behalf of our nation, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly designates April 2019 as Veterans Suicide Awareness Month in Vermont, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont National Guard, the Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs, and Valerie Pallotta.