



Wisconsin State Assembly

State Capitol, Madison, Wisconsin 53702

January 29, 2016

Senator Mary Lazich
Room 219 South
State Capitol

Representative Joan Ballweg
Room 210 North
State Capitol

Dear Senator Lazich and Representative Ballweg,

I am writing to respectfully request that, as co-chairs of the Joint Legislative Council, you act to create a Study Committee on Veteran's Mental Health Issues.

As Wisconsin continues to welcome back military servicemen and women returning from the wars in the Middle East, it is crucial that we work to ensure that those who served in our armed forces receive the support they need to successfully transition back to normal civilian life. We have seen time and time again the destructive effects that unaddressed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other combat-related mental health issues have on veterans and their families, and we must take decisive action to help veterans overcome these challenges.

The prevalence of mental health issues within America's military and veteran populations is now well-documented. A 2014 Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Psychiatry study found that for soldiers, rates of several types of mental illness are significantly higher than for civilians. Rates of depression among soldiers are five times as high as among civilians, and PTSD rates are nearly 15 times higher for soldiers. Unfortunately, for many veterans, the transition back to civilian life does not bring an end to the psychological challenges resulting from military service.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, approximately 11-20% of Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans suffer from PTSD, and over 30% of Vietnam veterans are affected by the disorder. Beyond the direct challenges that PTSD and related disorders pose to veterans as they seek to find civilian jobs and return to normal day-to-day life, mental health issues serve to exacerbate other problems that affect veterans, such as homelessness and substance abuse.

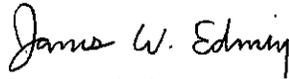
Confronting PTSD and helping veterans heal could help to reduce the prevalence of these issues in addition to eradicating the underlying psychological traumatic disorders that thousands of veterans struggle with each and every day.

I believe that forming a Study Committee focused on veteran's mental health issues could help the Wisconsin Legislature work toward finding real solutions to the challenges that veterans face as a result of their service to our country. Thank you for your time and consideration.

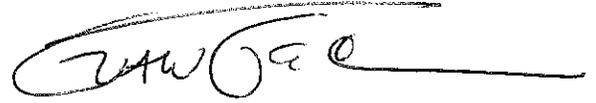
Sincerely,



Dianne Hesselbein
79th Assembly District



James Edming
87th Assembly District



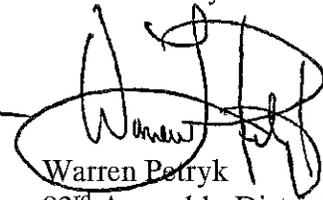
Evan Goyke
18th Assembly District



Dave Heaton
85th Assembly District



Nick Milroy
73rd Assembly District



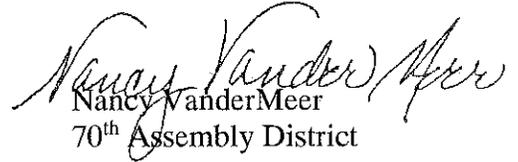
Warren Petryk
93rd Assembly District



Daniel Riemer
7th Assembly District



Christine Sinicki
20th Assembly District



Nancy VanderMeer
70th Assembly District