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Support Our Veterans This Veterans Day

Veterans Day is a time we pause as a nation to recognize and honor those who served and sacrificed to defend our nation and way of life. We owe them so very much. It is not enough to simply salute their service; it is our responsibility to value and support those who served.

In honor of Veterans Day, I introduced four separate pieces of legislation designed to help our veterans: create a Veterans Education Week; grant free state park admission for veterans and Gold Star Families; initiate a psilocybin medicinal pilot program to determine if this compound will help those deal with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and allow PTSD to be considered as a mitigating factor in criminal sentencing.

Veterans Education Week

Often Wisconsin Veterans and their families are unaware or have not taken advantage of the benefits available to them. This proposal would designate the second week of November as “Veterans Education Week,” the purpose being to educate Wisconsin veterans about the benefits they have earned, and to assist them in maximizing their use. After serving our country, they should utilize the full health, educational, and financial benefits they earned while in uniform.

Free State Park Admission

This bill would grant free state park admission to qualified veterans and to the families of those who lost a loved one serving their country--a Gold Star Family. This is a simple bill that will open up Wisconsin’s many and varied state parks to veterans, their families, and the families whose loved one gave the full measure of devotion to their country.

Medicinal Psilocybin Treatment Pilot Program

I cosponsored legislation to create a medicinal psilocybin treatment pilot program to study the effects of psilocybin on veterans over 21 who suffer from PTSD. This pilot program would be a joint effort of the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Transdisciplinary Center for Research in Psychoactive Substances and the School of Pharmacy. To be eligible, veterans must be 21 or older and suffer from treatment-resistant PTSD. The pilot program will generate research and reports that can be hopefully used to expand this treatment program statewide.

Psilocybin, a naturally occurring psychedelic, is shown to be effective in treating and relieving mental health symptoms and conditions, including PTSD. In a New York University study, scientists found

psilocybin treatments resulted in patients experiencing significant quality of life improvements. Three states have legislated medicinal psilocybin pilot programs and one has legalized it for medicinal use. Not only does this bill support the well-being of our nation's veterans, but it will also contribute data and research to improve treatment with psilocybin.

PTSD as a Mitigating Factor

Under current law, a court may consider mitigating factors when sentencing someone for a criminal offense. A mitigating factor is something, such as developmental disability, drug and alcohol addiction, and past good deeds, which may lessen the severity of the sentence. This bill would add Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to the list of mitigating factors that are considered during sentencing. Specifically, this bill applies to military veterans diagnosed with service-related PTSD. It is important to recognize the impact of PTSD on criminal behavior and take that into consideration when sentencing veterans for crimes they committed.

Veterans Day is a time to honor our veterans, and remind ourselves their sacrifices warrant our continued gratitude and strong support—every day! The four legislative bills described above will do exactly that: improve access to veterans' benefits, create new benefits, increase medical treatment options, and consider the full effects of PTSD.

Happy Veterans Day.

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