

Good morning Chairman Takano and Chairman Isakson. My name is Dr. Barry Schneider. I am an Air Force career officer and the National Commander and life member of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA. JWV will celebrate its 123rd birthday on Friday.

Suicide prevention.

The Jewish War Veterans of the USA acknowledges and appreciates the efforts taken to reduce and prevent the current reported rate of 20 veteran suicides per day. Veterans are 1.5 times more likely to commit suicide than non-veterans. More than 6000 veterans take their lives each year. I hope the new cabinet level task force initiated by President Trump last week to prevent veteran suicides will be successful. Suicide, as a public health issue, affects everyone, families, friends, and community. With the resources of this Committee, the VA and Congress, a plan can and should be devised to address this crisis in a meaningful and successful manner.

More must be done. JWV urges a full mental health screening, using all available assessment tools and full access to VA facilities for all individuals exiting the military.

Predatory Schools

As a lifelong educator and student, the issue of student veterans resonates with me in a personal way. I have earned two master's degrees with significant assistance from Federal and DOD programs. I am pleased that the post 9/11 G.I. Bill provides significant benefits and provides a positive path for returning veterans to reenter society as productive citizens. On behalf of JWV, we thank you for recognizing the importance of this Bill, and ensuring it's continued funding.

However, since the Post-9/11 GI Bill became law, many predatory for-profit colleges have sprung up, and they view our veterans as nothing more than dollar signs. There are many reports of aggressive and deceptive targeting of service members, veterans, and their families by these colleges.

They engage in misleading recruiting practices on military installations and often fail to disclose meaningful information enabling potential students to determine if

the college has a good record of graduating and positioning students for success in the workforce.

As I have traveled around the country and visited many colleges and universities, I've found great differences among the various institutions. The schools which excel have one thing in common. They provide one-stop shopping for our veterans and their families. For example, the University of Colorado, Boulder has established an Office of Veteran and Military Affairs (VMA). This office is staffed by veterans for veterans. They operate from their own building and provide transitional support to higher education and civilian life. The unique circumstances of veteran students moving from the military environment to academia requires special support. The University of Colorado's VMA office provides this in an exemplary way. This includes a bridge summer program and their Veterans Ambassador Program which helps new students connect with other veterans prior to the beginning of the school year. The VMA office provides both academic and life counseling, tutoring, hands-on assistance in applying for various VA benefits, and financial support.

To ensure that all of our veterans receive this level of support JWV ask that the Department of Veterans Affairs and Congress to establish a rating system ensuring that all educational institutions which receive government funding meet at least minimum standards of accountability, ensuring that our veterans can select, with confidence, a program which will meet their needs.

From my perspective, accountability must include a single point of contact, proper accreditation, staffing by veterans, readily available access to councilors for academic and financial advice, a sense of community where veterans can meet with other veterans to openly discuss problems and issues they may face during their transition. Further, a list of acceptable institutions must be made available on the VA web site.

Predatory institutions which take advantage of our veterans or their families **must be stopped!** The post 9/11 GI Bill is a great benefit and congress must insure it is properly administered.

These simple actions will ensure that our veterans have the greatest chance of success and that the government receives the best return on their investment.

Thank you for your time and attention.

