

THE COMMANDER JOHN SCOTT HANNON

VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT



Build Upon Innovative Suicide Prevention Initiatives

- Invest in non-VA organizations which provide non-VA mental health care to veterans through grant programs.
- Educate veterans on conducting "Buddy Checks."
- Invest in alternative treatment and therapy options like animal, agricultural, outdoor sports therapy.
- Develop metrics to track goals and objectives of the VA's National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide.
- Offer yoga, meditation, acupuncture, and chiropractic care at more VA facilities.

Improve Veterans Access to Mental Health Care

- Incentivize more mental health professionals to work at the VA and Vet Centers, including psychologists, psychiatrists, women Peer Specialists, licensed professional mental health counselors, and marriage and family therapists.
- Expand rural veterans' access to VA mental telehealth care.
- Invest in gender-specific specialists, services, and research.
- Require VA hospitals to employ at least one Suicide Prevention Coordinator.

Bolster VA Research Efforts

- Establish a study into whether living at a high altitude puts veterans at a higher suicide risk.
- Codify the VA's guidelines for treating mental health conditions, including gender-specific care for women.
- Invest in VA research into identifying and treating mental illness, particularly PTSD, TBI, depression, and anxiety.

Increase VA Accountability

- Set goals for and study the effectiveness of the VA's suicide prevention and mental health media outreach.
- Examine how the VA manages high-risk patients who go between VA and community providers.
- Study how the VA and DoD could better collaborate on integrated mental health care for service members and veterans.

Help Service Members Transition

- Automatically give every service member transitioning from active duty to the VA a full year of VA health care.
- Strengthen support for transitioning service members like job training, employment assistance, and education opportunities.
- Expand VA mental health care eligibility to veterans who left the military with an Other Than Honorable discharge.

Following a decorated 23-year career with the Navy SEALs, Commander John Scott Hannon retired to his family home in Helena, Montana, where he received VA treatment for PTSD, TBI, depression, and bipolar disorder. Scott found solace and recovery in many local organizations that allowed him to give back to his fellow veterans and his community, including the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), animal rescue and rehabilitation, working with at-risk youth, and helping veterans access the outdoors. Scott died by suicide on February 25, 2018, at the age of 46.