

HVAC Testimony—Rep. Kihuen 05/16/2018

- Chairman Roe, Ranking Member Walz and my esteemed colleagues on the Veterans Affairs Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to come before the Committee to discuss issues facing veterans in Nevada's Fourth Congressional District
- Mr. Chairman, over 300,000 veterans currently call Nevada home and of that number, over 57,000 reside in my district
- The most pressing issues facing our veterans today are reintegrating back into civilian life after being discharged from active duty, securing adequate employment and access to quality physical and mental healthcare
- Elected officials in Nevada have pledged to offer employment to more veterans, who are masters in multiple career fields and we are

working more diligently to ensure that veterans are not only informed about resources available to them, but also in ensuring that they gain access to these resources

- In order to provide better education and jobs for our veterans, I introduced the STEP for Veterans Act which would provide grants to community colleges to go out in their communities to see what jobs businesses cannot fill because local applications do not possess the necessary skills and also would support or create degree and certificate programs to give veterans who are attending community colleges the skills they need to fill these positions
- You may also be interested to learn that on March 9th of this year, former VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin visited Las Vegas and announced that Las Vegas and Southern Nevada had been chosen by the Department of

Veterans Affairs and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to be one of eight municipalities across the nation to take part in the Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families

- Data from 2014 indicates that more than 1 out of every 5 suicides in the State of Nevada is committed by a veteran
- This program, which will be comprised of experts from city, county, state and federal entities as well as non-profit organizations is aimed at creating awareness about the VA Medical Center, located in Congressional District Four, and other valuable resources that are available to active service members, veterans and their families
- Veterans in my District have reported that services provided at the VA Hospital have

drastically improved since the opening of the new facility. They have also expressed that they are pleased that patient advocates, support staff and other vital programs which assist veterans are all housed in the same area, which has created greater accessibility and utilization of these essential resources

- While some of the issues plaguing veterans have been resolved, there are still areas needing improvement which need to be addressed as well. Due to a lack of funding, VA pharmacies around the city have closed, creating a strain on veterans who are financially vulnerable and/or who are without adequate transportation to pick-up their prescriptions
- Also lacking is a local Veterans Benefits Administration processing station. Currently in the State of Nevada the only location to process claims is in Reno, which is an

inconvenience for any veteran who resides in the southern part of the state. On behalf of my veteran constituents, I respectfully request that you consider these deficiencies and how they can be remedied to more effectively serve our veterans

- In addition, we need to ensure that veteran's all across Nevada's Fourth Congressional District—which is the thirteenth largest District in the nation—have access to healthcare. That is why I have written a letter to the Department of Veterans Affairs urging them to protect health care services for veterans at the Ely Community Clinic so that they would not be forced to travel hundreds of miles to get the care they rely on and deserve
- In closing, I would once again like to thank Chair Roe and members of the committee for allowing me to speak to you about some of the challenges veterans in my district are facing,

as well as sharing with you some of the
victories we have achieved