

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Pennsylvania’s 15th Congressional District

Testimony submitted for the record for the House Veterans Affairs Committee

Member Day Hearing for Veterans Affairs Committee
Tuesday, September 10, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. | HVC-210, House Visitors Center

Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe:

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to share my priorities for the veteran community with the House Veterans Affairs Committee. As the father of an active-duty soldier who received a Purple Heart during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and a strong supporter of our nation’s service members, I appreciate your willingness to receive my testimony.

I recognize the challenges facing this Committee and appreciate your ongoing support for our service members, both active and retired. These brave Americans put their lives on the line regularly in the defense of a higher cause, so we have a responsibility to support them in the strongest and most responsible way possible.

While I certainly understand that the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have the best interests of our troops in mind, our oversight role is necessary to ensure these Departments stay on the right course.

During the 116th Congress, I have co-sponsored nine bills that are within the Veteran Affairs Committees jurisdiction. Each of these bills are of importance to my constituency and the large veteran population that makes up my district. I have always taken pride in working to ensure that our nations veterans receive the help, protection, and care that they need when they return home.

That is why some of my priorities this Congress include H.R. 592- the Protect Veterans from Financial Fraud Act of 2019. This bill, introduced by Rep. Julia Brownley, amends Title 38

to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs repays the misused benefits of veterans with fiduciaries and to establish an appeal process for determinations made by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs of veterans' mental capacity. Additionally, I have co-sponsored H.R. 303- the Retired Pay Restoration Act introduced by Rep. Bilirakis.

In addition to these two bills, I have co-sponsored several other pieces of legislation that touch upon the health and well-being of our nation's veterans. H.R. 663- the Burn Pits Accountability Act sponsored by Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, creates a registry of all service members effected by the burn pits that many have come in contact while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and in various countries in Africa. This list will enable those veterans effected to get the help they need before it is too late.

I have also signed onto H.R. 3495- the IMPROVE Well-Being for Veterans Act, sponsored by Rep. Jack Bergman. Every day, 22 veterans take their lives. It is time that we, as legislators, do whatever we can to put an end to that awful statistic. H.R. 3495 will require that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs provides financial assistance to eligible entities to provide and coordinate the provision of suicide prevention services for veterans at risk of suicide, and veteran families through the award of grants to such entities.

It is our duty to ensure that we protect our service members when they return home from active duty. For this reason, I have also co-sponsored H.R. 1802- the VA Billing Accountability Act, H.R. 485- VREASA, H.R. 303- Retired Pay Restoration Act, and H.R. 628- the WINGMAN Act. Each of these bills will contribute to the well-being of our nation's veterans. Whether it be through oversight, accountability, or programs to help them thrive.

We must also ensure that we recognize our nations military history and all the great that our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines have done for us over the years. It is because of this

that I have co-sponsored H.R. 2056, a bill that will recognize and honor the service of individuals who served in the United States Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II.

Additionally, I have supported H.R. 3155- the 75th Anniversary of the End of World War II Commemorative Coin Act.

Each one of these bills is indicative of my ongoing support of the veterans, not only in my district, but in the United States. As a Member of Congress, I take great pride in working hard for those who have selflessly continued to put their lives on the line so that we may enjoy the freedoms we do. Throughout my time in Congress I have always supported legislation that will give our active duty service members and veterans the tools that they need to succeed.

I respectfully request the committee's support of these nine pieces of legislation that will help improve the lives of our military veterans. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my testimony today. I look forward to working with you in the future.