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Wisdom, courage and compassion.

These three words describe unique attributes of the men and women that are and have been members of the armed services of the United States of America.

America's military is the greatest protective force in the world. There are many elements that contribute to making our military the best including leading edge technology, seasoned leadership and dedicated personnel. However, I believe that the overwhelming reason for our success is the manner in which we conduct ourselves.

As American citizens and as Americans in the military, we care deeply about the people of the world. No matter what their country, origin, culture or tradition, we care. America will never be defeated with a military like ours that conducts itself with wisdom, courage and compassion. Our military also serves as an ambassador to the people of the world. Average citizens in foreign countries learn about America through their interaction with our service members. For this reason America and its citizens are respected around the world; whether or not their leaders agree.

As citizens, knowing what our military does for us, we want to be confident that America is ensuring that our veterans are receiving the care that they have earned. Our men and women in the military have protected us and when necessary, sacrificed for us. It is our obligation to address their concerns even if they say they will “tough it out and not complain”.

HR1943 was initiated by an average citizen that asked the question, “Why are organizations like the Gary Sinise Foundation, Independence Fund and Wounded Warriors providing track wheelchairs to our veterans with private funds? Shouldn't the VA be providing them?”.

After talking to members of the House and Senate, it was determined that Congress thought that the VA was providing the track wheelchairs to our veterans. That conclusion prompted us to commission a research project to determine if the VA actually had the authority to provide powered track wheelchairs to service-disabled veterans for recreational purposes. The research found a statement in the VHA Prosthetic Clinical Management Program (PCMP) which states that “Motorized and power equipment or equipment for personal mobility intended solely for a recreational leisure activity should not be provided.”

Now knowing the “root cause” for service-disabled veterans being denied powered mobility devices for recreational purposes by the VA, we had the credibility to approach members of Congress with the facts. Once we had the research information organized in a digestible form, it wasn't long before Congressman Steve King (IA), a long time veteran supporter, agreed that the regulations needed changing and offered to introduce our initiative as a bill.

On April 05, 2017, HR 1943 was introduced by Congressman King. This was a great day for our country. HR1943 is not just a bill, it is a bill that came about the way our Founding Fathers intended, by citizens of our country using the legislative tools we were provided to make changes in the law.

Of course, we are only at the beginning of the process; taking little steps at a time. However, it has been a pleasurable experience so far and has shown that one citizen can make a difference and together there is nothing we cannot change.

I want to thank the Veterans Affairs Committee for selecting HR1943 as one of the bills to be reviewed at the hearing scheduled for September 26, 2017. This will be one more important step in the process of providing changes to our laws that will make the lives of our disabled-veterans as whole as possible.

Dave Meister