

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
STATE DIRECTORS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**



House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Statement for the Record

September 21, 2022

by

Wanda Wright

NASDVA President

Director

Arizona Department of Veterans Services

Chairman Mark Takano and Ranking Member Mike Bost, and members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, on behalf of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement in regard to authorizing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to States to improve outreach to veterans. NASDVA is comprised of Fifty-six (56) Directors: the State Departments of Veterans' Affairs for all fifty States, the District of Columbia, and five territories - American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

First, and foremost, NASDVA is clearly in support of the Grant Program authorized in *H.R.4601 - Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach Act (CVSO Act)*. We have no recommended corrections or suggestions for the wording of the authorizing language and think that it is well written. Authorization of this Grant Program for the States will significantly enhance outreach to our veterans and their family members particularly for the rural and highly rural veterans. It will provide an opportunity for States to acquire additional resources to supplement ongoing efforts to inform veterans with needed information to access their earned benefits. It is a daily challenge that Directors and Service Officers face in communicating with the veterans in their often-large geographic areas of responsibility. The resources will allow for increased training and the funding of additional county, state, or tribal VSOs to achieve better coverage, particularly with increased workload from the PACT Act signed into law.

It will be important that each State applying for a grant be prepared to show a detailed plan of their program's use and expected outcomes. Distribution of grant funds can and should be used to cover gap areas while being distributed equitably among counties and metropolitan areas. With the difference in size and population among the States, not allowing more than 10% of the annual grant going to one state alleviates inequity. Particular attention in the process needs to be addressed to enhance coverage for underserved communities e.g., American Indians, Alaska Natives, elderly and woman veterans, and any enclaves of special needs veterans. This grant can specifically help reach veterans that might be displaying symptoms of suicide ideation and those silently hurting who need contact and support.

NASDVA would welcome the opportunity to work with USDVA in the development of outcome measures, reporting requirements, and implementing regulations. This can be accomplished through our standing MOA (Memorandum Of Agreement) with USDVA as partners in the delivery of governmental services. This relatively small Grant Program can clearly have an important increase in outreach on the “frontlines” where veterans reside. Its impact will be consequential. We recommend that **H.R.4601** received the full attention of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs for passage.

Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Bost, and members of the House Committee, on behalf of NASDVA and its members, we appreciate the important legislative work you perform for those that have served our great country.

Respectfully,

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