



## **AMVETS Priorities for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress:**

- Provide prioritized COVID-19 vaccinations for veterans and healthcare delivery for veterans who have contracted the virus
- Introduce and pass legislation that will achieve a notable decrease in veteran suicide and an increase in the quality of life for America's veterans
- Allow Congressionally Chartered 501(c)(19) nonprofit organizations to accept tax-deductible donations
- Create a better VA for women veterans
- Include the VA for any COVID relief, or climate change focused legislation related to infrastructure planning, and employment related opportunities

### **COVID-19**

AMVETS strongly urges Congress to provide prioritization of vaccines to the many high risk veterans across the Nation. VA is amply positioned to distribute the vaccine and as their 4th mission can help address the many challenges facing distribution of the vaccine. However, it is unacceptable that so many high risk veterans have still yet to receive a vaccination while many low-risk Americans across the Nation are gaining access to the various vaccines.

### **Veteran Suicide and Mental Health**

AMVETS has prioritized suicide and mental health for the past three years. In that time meaningful legislation has been passed, but it is not enough to ensure we continue to move the needle on the most important issue facing our Nation's veterans. The VA's mental health budget has increased tremendously over the years and the veteran suicide rate has only increased or remained stagnant. This Congress, we will be working with Congress on the rollout of the legislation we advocated for last Congress, encouraging Congress to continue to look for meaningful data regarding existing Mental Health expenditures, and working to introduce and pass legislation that continues helping veterans to live lives worth living.

### **501(c)(19) tax code**

The Internal Revenue Code non-profit designation specifically for veterans' organizations is 501(c)(19). The key benefits are tax-exemption and the ability to accept tax-deductible donations. The current regulation requires 501(c)(19) organizations to maintain a membership of at least 90% wartime veterans to accept tax-deductible donations. AMVETS is the only one of the "Big 6" Congressionally-chartered veterans service organizations open to all non-wartime veterans. About 38% of AMVETS members are not wartime veterans, leaving the 70-year-old organization unable to accept tax-deductible donations.



**VA for women veterans**

AMVETS led the way in defending women veterans in the 116th Congress. VA, Congress, and all advocates need to work together to eliminate barriers to care and services that many women veterans face. We will work to increase the number of gender-specific providers in VA facilities to enhance privacy and improve the environment of care for women veterans. We will do everything in our power to ensure women veterans feel at home and welcome at their VA's.

**COVID 19 Stimulus, Climate Change Programs, and Veteran Unemployment**

VA facilities are facing record shortfalls in major and minor construction funding. The bottom-line is many VA facilities are energy inefficient dilapidated old buildings. AMVETS will fight to ensure that funding for any COVID 19 infrastructure stimulus plans, as well as any efforts to increase funding to make our nation more environmentally sustainable, include the many VA facilities across the nation. Additionally, veterans are two times more likely to be unemployed then they were one year ago. As such, AMVETS will be fighting to ensure that veteran specific employment components are included for any large scale government COVID or environmentally focused stimulus plans.

**Legislation that AMVETS has publicly supported in the 117th Congress:**

Draft Bill: the Fair Care for Vietnam Vets Act of 2021 to be introduced by Chairman Jon Tester, which would add Hypertension to the VA's presumptive list moving forward

Draft Bill: No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act to be introduced by Representative Lauren Underwood

Draft bill: Protecting Moms Who Served Act to be introduced by Representative Lauren Underwood

Fiscal Year 2021 Congressional Budget Resolution—which includes COVID-19 relief funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)



## 116TH CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- ✓ H.R. 6395 FY2021 NDAA with Agent Orange Amendment
- ✓ S. 332 Agent Orange Exposure Fairness Act
- ✓ S. 4511 Veterans Benefits Enhancement and Expansion Act
- ✓ S. 514 Deborah Sampson Act
- ✓ S. 4883 Brian Tally Act
- ✓ S. 4594 Caring for the Survivors and Families of Veterans Act of 2020
- ✓ S. 785 Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019

\* ✓ = passed into law

