

The Growing Need for Veteran's Support

North Carolina is home to over 769,000 veterans and has the greatest number of active duty troops, 116,000, on the East Coast. By conservative estimates, 10% of all homeless individuals in North Carolina are veterans. Unemployment among veterans age 18-26 is twice that of their non-veteran peers.

Regressive legislation passed by the 2013-2014 General Assembly impacts many North Carolinians, including veterans, service members, and military families.

In a measure that was criticized by the US military, the NC General Assembly passed a bill allowing lenders to increase predatory lending loan rates/fees for small loans that were often used by military service members, (WRAL 6/1/11, Vote 701 BH 810) [1]

In 2012, the US House voted against a motion to maintain current funding levels in inflation-adjusted terms for a number of programs including all discretionary spending that provided benefits to veterans. The motion was rejected by a party-line vote of 177-238. (HR 3578, Vote #31, 2/3/12) [2]

In June 2012, following party lines, the US House voted 188-233 against a \$75 million increase to a program that provided veterans housing assistance in the form of rental vouchers. (HR 5972, Vote #449, 6/29/12)

In 2013, Gov. Pat McCrory signed Senate Bill 4, which opted North Carolina out of the Affordable Care Act, "Obamacare". 500,000 poor families have been denied health care insurance coverage. There are 54,000 uninsured veterans in North Carolina; the Medicaid expansion could have covered 23,000 veterans.

In 2013, again on a party line vote, the US House voted against a motion to increase funding for the Veterans Benefits Administration by \$9.2 million in order to hire additional claims processors. The motion was rejected by a vote of 198-227. (HR 2216, Vote #192, 6/4/13) [2]

At the same time, congress continued to push for spending an extra \$436 million on Abrams tanks (\$7.5M each) which experts explicitly say is not needed, [3] and a \$15 billion aircraft carrier. U.S. military spending has jumped from \$1,500 per capita in 1998 to \$2,700 in 2008 [4]

In NC, 4 VA hospitals serve NC's veterans' community. At the Durham VA, the average wait time for new mental health patients is 104 days. The most common mental health issues for veterans, at time of suicide, are depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and bi-polar disorder. From 2009-2011, 505 NC Veterans died from (confirmed) suicide.

The evidence suggests that such invisible wounds are widespread. A study by the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center found that for all the military personnel medically evacuated from Afghanistan between 2001 and 2012, the most frequent diagnosis was not physical battle wounds but "adjustment reaction." This category includes grief, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress and other forms of moral injury and mental disorders caused or inflamed by war. [5]

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By the Numbers:

Total number of Service member dependents in North Carolina: 190,896

Families/Service members with children: 43%

Number of Uninsured Veterans in North Carolina: 54,000

Homeless Veterans in North Carolina: 1413 persons or, 10% of the homeless population from the 2012 NC Point in Time (PIT) count.

National Incidence of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): 287,861 Service members (2000 through Q3, 2013). It is projected that 24,429 of North Carolina's service members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan will have a probable TBI.

National Incidence of PTSD: 13%-20% of the 2.6 million Service members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001 (actual number range: 338,000-520,000 persons). It is projected that between 18,791 and 46,352 of North Carolina's service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan will experience PTSD. [6]

Repeal regressive legislation that hurts NC's veterans and military families. Bring our war dollars home to support veterans' successful reintegration into their families and their communities.

Sources:

[1] <http://www.dsc.org/pressrelease/let-s-make-2014-about-veterans-thom-tillis-puts-outside-special-interests-ahead-north>

[2] <http://www.dsc.org/pressrelease/let-s-make-2014-about-veterans-bill-cassidy-s-career-reveals-shameful-anti-veterans>

[3] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/28/abrams-tank-congress-army_n_3173717.html

[4] <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2065246,00.html>

[5] http://afhsc.army.mil/viewMSMR?file=2013/v20_no6.pdf

[6] <http://www.veteransfocus.org/north-carolina-by-the-numbers/>

