



**Legislative Alert #113-43: SUPPORT H.R. 4504 & S. 2357, the Department of Defense Suicide Tracking Act of 2014**  
DEFENSE and VETERANS

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**Issue Background:** According to recent studies, Veteran suicide claims 22 American lives a day on average. Additionally, according to the four military services, there were 289 suicides among Active Duty troops in 2013, while the National Guard and Reserve counterparts experienced 152 suicides in the same time period. Despite decreases in reported Active Duty suicides last year, the increasing numbers of suicide among National Guard and Reserve members illustrates the need for an increased awareness of suicide and preventive measures among servicemembers as well as an increased access to medical care for members of the National Guard and Reserves suffering from trauma associated with the burdens of war. The Department of Defense (DOD) currently has gaps within the suicide data collection processes regarding both members and families of the National Guard and Reserve Components and it is imperative to fix these gaps for the overall military community as well.

**Action Required:** Contact your Representatives and Senators and urge them to support and cosponsor H.R. 4504, introduced by Representative Niki Tsongas (MA-03), and S. 2357, introduced by Senator Lisa Murkowski (AK), the Department of Defense Suicide Tracking Act of 2014, which would improve the care provided to servicemembers returning home from deployment overseas as well as their families.

**Details (To Be Put Into Letter):**

Recent studies have found that Veteran suicide claims 22 American lives a day on average. Despite a decrease in reported Active Duty suicides last year, the four military services reported 289 suicides among Active Duty troops in 2013, with the National Guard and Reserve counterparts experiencing 152 suicides in the same time period. While the Department of Defense (DOD) does track suicide data among Active Duty service members, there currently are gaps exist within the suicide data collection process of members and families of the National Guard and the Reserve Components. Improved efficiencies are needed in regards to identifying and tracking suicide and mental health information for all components of the Armed forces, Active and Reserve.

H.R. 4504 and S. 2357 would increase access to care for Veterans and eliminate red tape that causes transition to be difficult for returning servicemembers receiving treatment. The Department of Defense Suicide Tracking Act of 2014 would standardize suicide risk data across the services for

Veterans and establish new protections for military family members from self-destructive behavior. This legislation improves the consistency in Reserve Component suicide prevention and resiliency programs and requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a standard method for collecting, reporting, and assessing suicide data and suicide attempt data involving members of the National Guard and Reserves. Additionally, the legislation establishes a DOD suicide prevention program for military dependents and would require each service to implement programs to track, report, and analyze information regarding suicides involving Active Duty and Reserve family members.

With more complete suicide data regarding the military available, the act works to provide more effective services to members of the military and their families as well as working to provide a better understanding of the extent of suicides and suicide attempts so prevention programs can be improved and extra assistance provided. Finally, the legislation provides more access to behavioral health services for servicemembers and families recovering from war, helping to make servicemembers' transition to civilian life as smooth as possible.

**Take Action:** Click the [“Take Action”](#) link at the top of the Alert to immediately email and/or write to your Senators and Representatives. This is the quickest and most effective method of expressing your views to Congress. You can also write and/or e-mail the ‘Details’ section or edit as you desire for a more personalized communication . Also, contact friends and family and urge them to use the Contact Congress feature on AUSN’s website as well. Please direct any questions concerning this issue to our Director of Legislation, Anthony Wallis, at 703-548-5800 or at [Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org](mailto:Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org).