

***Bill Requires Department of Defense to Review Records of more than 30,000 Servicemembers Discharged with Personality Disorder***

**Washington, DC** – Today, Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN) with Rep. Tom Rooney (R-FL), Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and Rep. Jeff Denham, introduced the Servicemembers Mental Health Review Act of 2012.

The bill directs the Secretary of Defense to expeditiously review and correct over 30,000 personality disorder discharges that occurred between 2001 and now.

The bill will ensure the records are corrected for those veterans who were wrongly separated on the basis of a Personality Disorder (PD) or Adjustment Disorder (AD). Many of these veterans actually suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) due to their combat experiences or military sexual trauma.

*“I am concerned that service members who are improperly discharged with personality or adjustment disorders will have a difficult time reintegrating back into civilian life,”* said Walz. *“Action must be taken to correct the military records and provide these wounded warriors with the disability, healthcare, and economic opportunity benefits they have earned.”*

In 2008, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that 26,000 soldiers were improperly discharged with personality disorders between 2001 and 2007. Based on a review of several hundred cases, GAO indicated that compliance rates were as low as 40 percent. As of 2010, the military separated more than 30,000 service members with a personality disorder.

Many of the troops being discharged with PD or AD have already deployed and have seen combat. Instead of properly diagnosing these soldiers with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI) the Defense Department diagnosed the service members with PD.

Since PD is a preexisting condition, DOD isn't obligated to award the service member the same

benefits they would receive if they were diagnosed with PTSD or TBI.

Disturbingly, records show the personality disorder diagnosis is being used disproportionately on women. Recent reports show a pattern of the military using psychiatric diagnoses to discharge women who report sexual assaults. Nearly 20,000 service members are sexually assaulted each year

*"I was diagnosed with a personality disorder for failing to adjust adequately to being raped"* said Former Petty Officer 3rd Class, Jenny McClendon.

Veteran Service Organizations have publically criticized the Defense Department's systematic misuse of Personality Disorder discharges and their failure to repair the harm it causes to the veterans they've misdiagnosed.

*"While DOD protects its reputation and its pocketbook, veterans with PTSD and TBI continue to be denied the benefits and medical care they are due,"* said Dr. Thomas Berger, Executive Director of Vietnam Veterans of America's Veterans Health Council.

"For warriors separated from service based on inappropriate psychiatric labels, this bill would establish a much-needed remedial avenue for records-correction and benefit eligibility," said Steve Nardizzi, CEO and Executive Director of Wounded Warrior Project. "Erroneous 'personality or adjustment disorder' designations have barred too many warriors with PTSD from getting needed help," he explained.

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