



Representative Chris Tuck

House Minority Leader

Alaska State Legislature

District 23 - Representing Dimond Estates, Foxridge, Taku,
Campbell, Northwood and Windemere

Sponsor Statement

House Concurrent Resolution 25

Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day

Post-traumatic stress develops in many people who have seen or lived through a shocking, scary, or dangerous event. It is natural to feel afraid during and after a traumatic situation. Fear triggers many split-second changes in the body to help defend against danger or to avoid it.

Many Americans have had a trauma. About 60% of men and 50% of women experience at least one traumatic event. Of those who do, about 8% of men and 20% of women will develop post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI). For some events, like combat and sexual assault, people are more likely to develop PTSI.

Between 2000 and 2014, approximately 139,000 active-duty service members were diagnosed with new-onset of post-traumatic stress within the Military Health System (MHS). Of these, roughly 112,000 service members were diagnosed following a deployment of 30 days or more to an overseas contingency operation. The numbers presented reflect only those service members identified by the MHS as meeting official criteria for post-traumatic stress. As such, they may underestimate the true scope of the problem since they do not reflect those service members who choose not to seek assistance because of concerns around stigma and other barriers that may discourage them from seeking help.

Post-traumatic stress has historically been wrongly viewed as a mental illness caused by a pre-existing "flaw" in a person's brain or character, and the term "post-traumatic stress disorder" - or PTSD - carries a stigma that perpetuates this misconception.

Referring to a post-traumatic stress injury as a disorder perpetuates the stigma which in turn discourages people seeking proper medical treatment. Raising awareness of the condition and eliminating the stigma may encourage people affected to seek help voluntarily and allow for timely treatment that may prevent suicide. Efforts should continue to make the condition less stigmatizing and more honorable to increase the number of affected people who seek assistance.

The brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces and many other Americans who survive a traumatic experience deserve the investment of every possible resource to ensure their lasting physical, mental and emotional well-being.

The United States Senate, United State House of Representatives and eight states have passed a similar resolution to establish June 27 as Post-Traumatic Injury Awareness Day. This is a nationwide effort to change the conversation referring to post-traumatic stress from a disorder to an injury and to bring awareness, remove the stigma and help more Americans get the help they need to battle PTSI.