



February 6, 2017

Office of Rep. Chris Tuck
Alaska State Capitol, Room 204
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Tuck:

Service members who fight for our nation and return home struggling with the effects of an invisible wound should not have to be additionally burdened by a stigma which labels their battle-borne injury a disorder. No one wants to be told they have a disorder, least of all a proud young veteran. Their most instinctive and immediate reaction is to deny it.

Denial interferes with timely treatment which can lead to dangerous, needless, and too often fatal, consequences.

Honor for ALL is dedicated to eliminating the stigma attached to post-traumatic stress, advancing its treatment, preserving the dignity of the injured, and above all, averting impulsive or dangerous behavior leading to suicide. Although we are a veterans organization, our concern is with all who suffer from the psychological and moral injuries now all grouped together under term Post-traumatic Stress Disorder a term crafted 37 years ago by the American Psychiatric Association to commonly understand and treat veterans who had endured severe traumatic combat stress;

Since then, it has been shown through intensive research involving electro-magnetic imaging that post-traumatic stress can actually cause physical changes within the brain. These physical changes more accurately describe an injury than a disorder – a wound not a weakness.

The use of the word “disorder” conveys a negative image which can by its nature discourage some from seeking care and others from caring.

The use of the word “disorder” in relation to combat stress assails the sense of honor that should accompany any wound received by a service member in action against an enemy of the United States. Further, its use demeans the dignity of all affected individuals, to include, but not

be limited to: first responders; victims of abuse and crime; survivors and witnesses of life-threatening accidents and natural disaster; and all the loved ones thereof.

By introducing the word “injury” in lieu of “disorder” in the designation, we can begin to effectively diminish the stigma associated with invisible wounds and their perception as mental illness.

Our campaign, originally started with the help of the Adjutant Generals Association of the United States (AGAUS) and the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), is now in its third year. In 2015 we were able to enlist the support of the US House of Representatives and 8 individual states either by legislative resolution and/or gubernatorial proclamation. In 2016, the House was joined by the US Senate and the number of states went up to 27. In three of those states, South Carolina, Virginia and New Jersey, resolutions were adopted making the assignment perennial. This year we hope to gather the support of the other 23 states to join with Congress in a unified effort to establish a truly national day of recognition and hasten the end of a long overdue indifference to a very old injustice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'T' followed by a horizontal line.

Thomas Mahany
Executive Director
Honor for ALL