

HCR 2 - AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

27Feb2019... 0055h

2019 SESSION

19-0233

01/05

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION **2**

A RESOLUTION requesting an investigation on whether opioids, benzodiazepines, and exposure to agent orange contribute to suicides by veterans.

SPONSORS: Rep. Abramson, Rock. 20

COMMITTEE: State-Federal Relations and Veterans Affairs

ANALYSIS

This bill requests that the United States Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Veterans Administration investigate whether opioids, benzodiazepines, and exposure to agent orange contribute to a higher rate of suicides by veteran members of the armed forces.

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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Nineteen

A RESOLUTION requesting an investigation on whether opioids, benzodiazepines, and exposure to agent orange contribute to suicides by veterans.

1 Whereas, in fiscal 2012, the Veterans Administration issued benzodiazepines to 28 percent of
2 the 640,000 veterans seen for post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the amount of
3 prescriptions at the Veterans Administration for these drugs amounted to 2.4 million in fiscal 2014;
4 and

5 Whereas, 27 percent of veterans who received opioid analgesics from 2004-2009 also received
6 benzodiazepines; and

7 Whereas, benzodiazepines can be addictive and can possibly enhance fear following trauma and
8 suicidal thoughts, they also have some valid uses, such as stopping panic attacks from escalating,
9 easing sleep disorders, and helping agitated patients at high risk of harm to themselves or others;
10 and

11 Whereas, the 2015 suicide rate for women veterans receiving care through the Veterans Health
12 Administration was 17.8 per 100,000 person-years, compared to 45.6 for men under care; and

13 Whereas, the Department of Veterans Affairs now reports that the New Hampshire veterans
14 suicide rate of 33 per year was, "significantly higher than the national suicide rate;" and

15 Whereas, 20.6 armed service veterans are taking their own lives each day, substantially higher
16 than the national average, with the suicide rate for veterans aged 18-34 increased substantially to
17 45 deaths per 100,000; and

18 Whereas, while the Veterans Administration's clinical practice guidelines recommend against
19 their use in patients with PTSD due to "lack of efficacy data and growing evidence for the potential
20 risk of harm," physicians often prescribe them to patients who come to them already taking those
21 medications because abruptly stopping them can incur serious risks; and

22 Whereas, the suicide rate among veterans ages 18 to 27 receiving care at VA medical facilities is
23 79 per 100,000, and suicide rates among armed service veterans receiving care has been
24 substantially higher than among those not under care; now, therefore, be it

25 Resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

26 That the New Hampshire general court respectfully urges the Congress of the United States,
27 the Department of Defense, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to investigate whether or not
28 opioids, benzodiazepines, and exposure to agent orange are contributing to the high number of
29 suicides by veteran members of the armed forces; and

30 That the house clerk forward official copies of this resolution to the President of the
31 United States, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the
32 United States Senate, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and to all the

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1 members of the New Hampshire congressional delegation with the request that this resolution be
2 officially entered in the Congressional Record as a high priority for the Congress of the
3 United States of America.