

Letter to the President of the United States

Dear Mr. President:

Your recognition of the continuing crisis of Veteran suicide in the country has led to the most promising efforts undertaken against Veteran suicide in the Nation's history. You have insisted that we seek innovative ways to improve Veteran's well-being, and you have signed an executive order leading to the creation of the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS). This executive order also established an interagency task force to develop and implement this national plan for the prevention of suicide at the national and community levels.

A critical message of PREVENTS is that we need to change the culture surrounding mental health and suicide, encouraging Veterans — as well as our whole Nation — to be open to talking about and addressing mental health in general and suicide in particular. The executive order calls for empowering Veterans by giving them a sense of purpose so they are less likely to take their own lives. In addition, if the culture around them supports speaking up and speaking out, it is much more likely that they will seek and receive the care they need long before the tragedy of suicide occurs. We know that our Veterans are willing and able to lead the way for this change. This is what they do when they see a need — they step in to respond.

The attached PREVENTS Roadmap offers recommendations on how best to equip State and local governments, engage faith-based communities, and expand the existing research ecosystem to continue to refine treatments and to improve how we engage Veterans so we can end this national tragedy. This effort will require extensive collaboration among the departments of Veterans Affairs, Health and Human Services, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development and others. Partnerships also will be needed with and among local governments, corporations, and Veteran Service Organizations to identify at-risk Veterans and quickly get them the help they need.

Respectfully,



Robert L. Wilkie

Secretary of Veterans Affairs



Brooke L. Rollins

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