

Valley Metro Buses to Promote Suicide Awareness

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Rep. Harry E. Mitchell today welcomed the Department of Veterans Affairs' new efforts to reach out to veterans in Arizona and across the country who may be at risk of suicide.

This week, the VA is completing the launch of a national advertising campaign to prevent suicides in the veteran population by linking at-risk veterans with emergency assistance and counseling. This new effort will put ads on 200 Valley Metro buses, as well as more than 20,000 buses and trains in 123 other communities nationwide [Source: [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), June 19, 2009].

"The VA's national ad campaign is headed in the right direction," said Mitchell. "Many of our returning veterans and those who served in past generations bear wounds that can't be seen and are difficult to diagnose. We can't wait for them to come to the VA. The VA needs to go to them."

As chairman of the Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Mitchell has repeatedly called upon the VA to increase outreach to veterans who need mental health services and are at risk of suicide. Out of an estimated veteran population of 25 million veterans, only about 8 million veterans are enrolled for health care services through the VA [Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](#), October 16, 2008; [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), April 17, 2009].

Last year, following months of pressure from Mitchell calling on the VA's efforts to reach out to veterans who may be at risk of suicide and have not already sought assistance from the VA [Source: [CNN](#), May 12, 2009], the former Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Peake unilaterally reversed the VA's long-standing ban on advertising.

The ad that will appear on Valley buses features a silhouette of a soldier kneeling in front of an American Flag with text that says, "It takes the courage and strength of a warrior to ask for help. If you're in an emotional crisis call 1-800-273-TALK." It can be viewed at http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/

Mitchell Welcomes Expanded VA Outreach to Valley Veterans

Tuesday, 30 June 2009 15:54

The national ad campaign builds on a successful three-month pilot program that included 300 ads on Washington, D.C. Metro trains and buses [Source: [CBS News](#), July 14, 2008]. The pilot, which started in July 2008, coincided with a 200- to 300-percent increase in calls to the region's veterans' suicide prevention hotline [Source: [CBS News](#), July 28, 2008].