
WOUNDED WARRIORS SENT BACK INTO BATTLE

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After a wounded soldier returns home from war, the battle never ceases – it now means fighting the United States government. Soldiers head off to war, become injured in battle, and return home to a nation where it is difficult to access health-care.

From the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are over fifty-thousand physically disabled and over five-hundred thousand mentally injured veterans. These are simply the reported numbers, with an estimate of seventy-five percent of all veterans struggling with memories from combat. Despite the great services these veterans provided for our country, forty percent report difficulty in receiving physical care from Veterans Affairs doctors. Also, thirty-five percent of veterans seeking access to mental health services in the past year were unable to obtain it. On average it takes the VA about nine months to complete a single medical compensation claim; in some major urban areas that number increases to six hundred days.

What message are we sending our veterans? And furthermore, what are we demonstrating to those who desire to serve in the future? That you can protect us now, but we cannot necessarily protect you later? This is entirely different from our roots following other wars. In 1944, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act was passed by President Roosevelt, which provided a range of benefits for veterans returning from World War II. So what has changed? Well, nowadays we tend to look strictly at the economic perspective of providing benefits to veterans, and not the humanitarian aspect. We, in a sense, look down upon veterans needing help and care. About twenty-eight percent of veterans claim they worry about seeking mental health care due to the stigma associated with these issues. This is absurd; we expect soldiers to have a wall up while away on the battlefield, but also in their home country.

It is difficult for these veterans to assimilate back into civilian life. When applying for jobs, their disabilities often hinder them from landing the position. Veterans used to be the “most qualified” for obtaining occupations following the war in the 1900's, and now service is often looked at with caution. Employers worry about such things as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which could keep these servicemen unemployed. Most of the jobs veterans seem to obtain are minimum wage occupations, as if they were just as qualified before they left for war. I guess employers overlook the “Fought to protect the freedom of our country” line on their resume.

We as a country need to recognize the importance of the soldiers' experiences, and also the traumatic effects they cause.

With these occupations, it is difficult for the wounded soldier to afford the care they need. Outside third-party organizations attempt to assist the Veterans Affairs program in attending to the soldiers. The most prominent group is the Wounded Warrior Project. This organization raises hundreds of millions of dollars a year to help aid wounded veterans in all aspects possible.

Even though this provides great hope and assistance in our country, more still needs to be done. The United States government needs to reevaluate its spending towards our veterans. Some of the money designated for helping foreign countries or spent in medicare should be specifically redirected toward our wounded warriors. Doctors could be paid specifically by the government to treat these veterans, so they do not have to wait for compensation. Our healthcare professionals can lend a helping hand by giving to those who gave for us.

As for the rest of society, we can assist by erasing the injured veteran stigma and giving veterans more opportunities to reintegrate into society. Come on America; we claim to support our troops, so let's not send them into another war at home.