



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

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"The question of why the government is so willing to send our sons, daughters, husbands, wives, fathers and mothers to war and not willing to offer timely medical care for the wounds and illnesses resulting from their service is a question that should resound very seriously with the American public. This is not the time or the place for politicians to play a numbers game with people's lives. It is not only disrespectful but puts them in mortal danger. VVAW and IVAW work with veterans every day who must deal with the painful realities of a healthcare system that rejects them because it is underfunded, understaffed and most importantly because it is being broken down and torn apart by a government who seems to value their death more than their lives." - Dave Curry, "From Vietnam to Iraq Ignoring the Veteran Health Care Crisis," May 2005

Dear Friends,

Another day has passed. Another 22 of our brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, moms, and dads have committed suicide. No matter how many we have lost in the years since we were first deployed to Vietnam, it never gets easier. What makes it even worse is that the majority of those now taking their own lives could be our children or grandchildren.

We need to stop the wars that produce these results, and we need to make sure that we provide the services necessary to help reduce this number to ZERO. Our brothers and sisters need the services of the VA now more than ever. Not a depleted and privatized husk of a VA, decimated for private profit. These are not just statistics. These are veterans with names, veterans with stories to be told, veterans who have left friends and families behind.

Brandon Ketchum, a 33-year-old former Marine and Army National Guardsman, recently killed himself after being denied admittance to a VA facility in Iowa City, despite telling doctors that he was having "serious mental issues." He had been struggling with PTSD and substance abuse after returning home from his three tours overseas. He had deployed twice to Iraq as a Marine combat engineer where his job was to clear roadside explosives. He also served once in Afghanistan in the Army National Guard. The VA needs to be sufficiently funded, so veterans like Brandon get the help they need when they need it.

"I am a Vietnam veteran who is concerned that the Veterans Affairs Mission Act, recently signed by President Trump, will lead to the destruction of the VA system, the system best suited to care for me and my fellow veterans. The bill was sold as a way to help veterans get care from non-VA doctors. But in reality, it threatens the very existence of the VA and seems destined to lead to budget cuts for VA services, putting the VA on a path to cannibalize itself — which will hurt veterans and their families. I will continue to fight to strengthen the VA and its care for veterans. With a strong, well-funded VA, we can serve our vets who served our country. It is up to us to voice our concerns to our members of Congress and senators."
- Frank Toner, VVAW member

VVAW must remain vigilant and do what we can to educate our members about the reality of the attacks on the VA. We must do what we can to limit and stop the never-ending wars the US is engaged in. Many years of struggle have taught us that the ballot box is one tool we can use to accomplish this goal, especially now that we no longer have the energy to occupy the Statue of Liberty. We do have the strength to educate our brothers and sisters and encourage them to see beyond the administration's lies and harmful actions.

"Because efforts to dismantle the VHA are ramping up . . . It's essential that veterans and health care reformers make sure that those who are elected understand the pitfalls of VA privatization. They need to support fully funding and staffing the VHA, supporting – not bashing – VHA employees and their unions. Congress needs to start designing serious proposals to strengthen a healthcare system that not only helps veterans, but through its research, teaching and models of clinical care, serves us all." - Suzanne Gordon, Veteran health care advocate

Please join us in trying to stop the attacks on the VA. Write a letter to the editor to your local paper, like Frank Toner did. Submit an article for VVAW's newspaper, *The Veteran*. Educate the next generation by speaking with local high schoolers. Join marches and events where you can. Speak to fellow veterans about what VVAW did for you. Get to the ballot box in November and send a message with your vote. Fight to save the VA. We need all of us, all of you, to take action in whatever ways you are able.

In these challenging times, we understand the demands on everyone's limited resources. So, we are deeply thankful when our members and supporters make tax-deductible donations to VVAW's work, at whatever level. Your contributions to VVAW help us keep distributing our newspaper, *The Veteran*, to our members, friends, and supporters. Please pass out copies to your family and friends, your local library, or your local VA. Your donations also keep our website going, where we have every issue of VVAW's newspaper online as well as archives of many other articles, photos, and videos. Your donations allow us to make VVAW's legacy not only accessible to all through our website but also to archive them for generations to come. We thank all of you for your continued support.

In solidarity,

William Branson

Bill Branson
VVAW Board member

I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War \$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other to support its work for peace, justice, and for decent benefits for all veterans. Donations to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at www.vvaw.org.

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