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## [H.R. 2915, Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act](#)

### FLOOR SITUATION

On Tuesday, February 9, 2016, the House will consider [H.R. 2915](#), *the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act*, under suspension of the rules. H.R. 2915 was introduced on June 25, 2015 by Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA) and was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, which ordered the bill reported, as amended, by voice vote on September 17, 2015.

### SUMMARY

H.R. 2915 directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs that are the most effective and have the highest satisfaction rates among female veterans. In addition, the bill requires the VA to establish and disseminate standards and procedures to ensure that any veteran who participated in a classified mission or served in a sensitive unit may access VA mental health care in a manner that fully accommodates his or her obligation to protect classified information.

### BACKGROUND

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) issued a report that found in 2012 between 18 and 22 veterans commit suicide every day.<sup>1</sup> In January 2014, the VA released an update to the 2012 Suicide Data Report that found increases in the suicide rate in female users of the VA health care system.<sup>2</sup> These findings echo recent research that found female veterans are five times more likely to commit suicide than male veterans.<sup>3</sup> According to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, these discoveries call into question the efficacy of the VA's mental health and suicide prevention programs for female veterans.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Suicide Data Report, 2012, Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services Suicide Prevention Program, <http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/suicide-data-report-2012-final.pdf> at 15.

<sup>2</sup> See Suicide Rates in VHA Patients through 2011 with Comparisons with Other Americans and Other Veterans through 2012, [http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/Suicide\\_Data\\_Report\\_Update\\_January\\_2014.pdf](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/Suicide_Data_Report_Update_January_2014.pdf) at 4.

<sup>3</sup> See [House Report 114-365](#) at 3.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

In addition, concerns about how to treat veterans who served on sensitive or classified missions during their military service rose after the tragic suicide death of Sergeant Daniel Somers in June 2013. Sergeant Somers' military service was largely classified and could not be discussed with anyone lacking the appropriate security clearance. Despite this, he was enrolled in group therapy over his objections and fear of inadvertently sharing classified information in that setting. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs determined this may have been an environment in which he felt he was unable to seek care due to his national security obligations.<sup>5</sup>

Provisions from [H.R. 421](#), the Classified Veterans Access to Care Act, are included in this bill.<sup>6</sup>

According to the bill sponsor, “[...]The Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act will help save the lives of women veterans, who are nearly six times as likely to commit suicide compared to non-veteran women. We can, and must, do more to address this crisis. My bill will ensure that we understand which mental health and suicide prevention programs work best for the growing number of our sisters, daughters, and mothers who have so bravely served our nation.”<sup>7</sup>

### **COST**

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that implementing H.R. 2915 would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2016 to 2020 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts. In addition, CBO estimates that enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues, and pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

### **STAFF CONTACT**

For questions or further information please contact [Jake Vreeburg](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 5-0190.

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<sup>5</sup> See [House Report 114-365](#) at 4.

<sup>6</sup> See [House Report 114-365](#) at 3.

<sup>7</sup> See Rep. Julia Brownley's Press Release, [“House Veterans' Affairs Committee Approves Brownley Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Bill.”](#) September 17, 2015.