

# JERRY MORAN

## Joint Hearing: Legislative Presentation of Veterans of Foreign Wars

*Opening Remarks of U.S. Senator Jerry Moran (R-Kan.)*

Wednesday, March 4, 2020 | 10:00 a.m.

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*As Prepared for Delivery:*

I want to welcome the Veterans of Foreign Wars here today, as well as the hundreds of VFW members and Auxiliary members who have joined us today. I would also like to extend a special welcome to those who traveled here from Kansas today. Can you all please stand and wave?

Thank you all for taking the time away from your day-to-day responsibilities to be here and for making the trip to our nation's Capital. I am grateful to have each of you present today as a testament to the important work you do in support of your fellow veterans.

Commander Schmitz, the advocacy and work the VFW does on behalf of our nation's veterans is critical, and I think I can speak for all present when I say that our committees are lucky to have your help with the vital responsibility we have to serve and care for our nation's veterans and their families.

Before I yield to Ranking Member Roe, I do want to share with you a few of my priorities as Chairman of the Senate VA Committee.

My top legislative priority is to give VA and local communities the authority and resources to help at-risk veterans find hope and stay off the path to suicide. VFW has consistently advocated for a focused and coordinated effort among Congress, VA, and stakeholders, to effectively address veterans' mental health needs and help prevent veteran suicide.

I also want to make certain that, through the MISSION Act, the VA is providing quality, timely access to health care for veterans, whether it be through VA or in their local communities.

This shared goal, both across the aisle in the Senate and across the Hill with our partners in the House, is one that we will continue to focus on as VA works toward full implementation of the MISSION Act.

Our veterans deserve the very best care that this country can offer. President Trump's budget proposal for FY2021 supports the ongoing implementation of community care under the MISSION Act, transforming the VA's system to provide veterans the care they need, their earned benefits on time, and reduce veteran suicide.

As Chairman, I look forward to learning more about the budget request and working with Secretary Wilkie, as well as all of you, to identify how veterans' outcomes can be improved through new investments in VA programs.

Another priority that has increasing urgency each day is addressing toxic exposures encountered through military service. Far too often, our VA system is stuck playing catch up long after the veteran has left the battlefield. With every conflict we continue to see that exposure to toxic substances is a part of warfare, yet we still struggle to fully identify, and account for, the risks from toxic exposure.

With VFW as a part of the TEAM Coalition addressing toxic exposure issues, I would like to thank you for your engagement alongside your partner VSOs and for all the coalition's efforts to increase access to quality care for those impacted by toxic exposure during military service.

Commander Schmitz, we look forward to your presentation today, and I look forward to working together to continue improving the benefits and services provided to our nation's veterans.

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