



## **PRESS RELEASE**

Vietnam Veterans of America

---

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 22, 2018**

**No. 18-4**

**Contact: Mokie Porter  
301-585- 4000, Ext. 146  
or 301-996-0901**

### **Veterans with Bad Paper Discharges to Get Mental Health Screening and Care from the VA**

[Washington, DC] -- Following the announcement last night of the final text of the omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America, said: "We at VVA owe a debt of gratitude to Senators Murphy, Tester, and Schatz, and Congressmen O'Rourke and Coffman – and to Secretary Shulkin – for fighting to ensure that veterans with a bad-paper discharge despite otherwise honorable service will finally receive the VA services that they so desperately need.

"For far too long we've heard from veterans who were denied help from the VA for a lifetime because of an administrative separation. A key provision of the omnibus will help these veterans, from the Vietnam War to the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as to future conflicts," Rowan said. "Once enacted, this legislation will save untold lives of countless forgotten heroes."

Language in the Consolidated Appropriations Act taken from Congressman Coffman's H.R. 918, the Veteran Urgent Access to Mental Healthcare Act and Senator Murphy and Congressman O'Rourke's Honor Our Commitment Act, S. 699/H.R. 1685 will entitle veterans administratively separated with an other-than-honorable discharge who have served at least 100 days on active duty, were deployed in a theater of combat operations or in support of combat operations, or were in an area in which hostilities were occurring; who suffered a physical assault or battery of a sexual nature or experienced Military Sexual Trauma; or served as a drone operator, to mental and behavioral health screening and care. In cases which a VA clinician deems therapeutically appropriate, or for those veterans who live far from VA healthcare facilities, the VA can allow them to obtain care and treatment from qualified non-VA providers.

To reach out to these veterans not later than 180 days after they've been discharged, the VA will dedicate a toll-free 1-800 number, post information at state veterans' affairs agencies as well as at VA facilities, and establish a transparent Character of Service Determination process for veterans to appeal if they have been denied services or benefits because of the nature of their discharge. In addition, the VA must submit annually a report to the appropriate committees in the House and Senate addressing how many individuals have requested initial mental health assessment under this program, and how many have subsequently received care.

# # #