



## **PRESS RELEASE**

Vietnam Veterans of America

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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **VVA Demands Hearing for VA Abandonment of Suicide-prevention Outreach**

**(Washington, D.C.)**--"Veterans and Congress have spent the last decade making sure that suicide prevention is the VA's top clinical priority, and in the last two years, it appears the VA has nearly completely abandoned that mission," said John Rowan, VVA National President. "Studies have shown that veterans who receive VA healthcare are far less likely to die by suicide than their peers, which makes outreach the most important part of the VA's suicide-prevention program. For the VA to abandon suicide-prevention outreach is essentially akin to malpractice on a massive scale."

The Government Accountability Office report released yesterday, "Improvements Needed in Suicide Prevention Media Outreach Campaign Oversight and Evaluation," revealed a disturbing reversal in VA's trend in suicide-prevention outreach -- and a drop in outreach spending that indicates suicide prevention has been all but forgotten.

Out of the \$6.2 million budget that the VA is required to spend on suicide prevention, in fiscal year 2018, they had been on track to spend less than one percent on ensuring that veterans gained access to services.

"A significant portion of the veterans whom our country loses to suicide each day are Vietnam veterans," noted Rowan. "Congress must find out what happened to the millions of dollars that were supposed to be spent on suicide prevention outreach, and then Congress must hold accountable those who failed to take seriously one of the greatest risks faced by veterans."