

I want to thank the Rules Committee for making this amendment in order and for the strong support and encouragement I have received in this effort from the chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs subcommittee. The gentleman from Texas' leadership of the subcommittee and his concern and compassion and advocacy for the needs of veterans is truly an inspiration.

Madam Chair, we have few responsibilities as solemn and as important as ensuring that our veterans receive the care that we have promised them as a Nation. To that end, my amendment directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to allocate \$20 million for direct advertising, the use of online social media and other media for suicide prevention outreach. Let me take a moment to tell you why this issue means so much to me, and I would like to tell you about one very remarkable family from my central New Jersey congressional district.

A little over a week ago, on July 14, I had the privilege of introducing Mrs. Linda Bean of East Brunswick, New Jersey, to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Linda was appearing before the Oversight and Investigations subcommittee to tell the story of how her son, Coleman, came to take his own life in September 2008. Linda made it clear why she had traveled to Washington to, I would say, courageously share her family's painful story: "I owe a duty to my son and our debt to the men with whom Coleman served."

You see, Coleman was a two-tour veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Like so many of our troops who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, Coleman developed post-traumatic stress disorder. In between and after those tours, he sought treatment for his PTSD. Because Sergeant Bean was a member of the Individual Ready Reserve, the so-called IRR--a pool of reserve soldiers not assigned to any unit but available for mobilization if needed--he could not get treatment for his condition because the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs refused to take ownership of Sergeant Bean and the thousands like him. A few weeks after Coleman took his life, the VA called to confirm his next appointment.

As Linda closed her testimony before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, she relayed how one VA official had told her, "If they won't walk through the door, we can't help them." Linda's response must be our response: "Of course we can help them. It is our duty to figure out how, not theirs."

Earlier this year, I secured the inclusion of a suicide prevention provision in the annual defense authorization bill that would require the Secretary of Defense to conduct periodic telephone or in-person outreach and counseling calls to reservists like Coleman. The idea is to check on the IRR member's mental, emotional and professional well-being and to identify and treat any IRR

members who are deemed to be at risk of harming themselves.

Because the other body has thus far failed to act on the fiscal year 2011 authorization, I have sent a letter to Secretaries Gates and Shinseki asking that they take whatever administrative action is necessary to reach out and monitor this very large pool of at-risk reservists. I have also asked that they meet with Greg and Linda Bean and explain in detail what those departments intend to do to prevent other Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans from suffering Coleman's fate.

Our commitment to reducing suicides among our veterans must be comprehensive and unwavering. This amendment today is designed to give the VA the resources and the direction to get appropriate and broad-based outreach under way as soon as President Obama signs this bill. I hope this amendment will be supported on a bipartisan basis, because, as Linda Bean says, "It's not their job to figure out how, it's ours."