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Contact: Brianna Bentov, Public Relations Manager, K9s For Warriors

BBentov@K9sForWarriors.org

904.686.1956 ext. 108



Congress Introduces PAWS Act (Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers) of 2019

Florida Republican Congressman John Rutherford is sponsoring the bill

(Ponte Vedra, FL) – The PAWs Act was introduced to Congress today by Congressman John Rutherford and, if passed, will require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide service dogs to veterans diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The bill is supported by K9s For Warriors, the largest service dog provider for disabled post-9/11 veterans in the U.S.

The intent of the bill is to make service dogs more accessible to all veterans wanting an alternative PTSD treatment option, to help reduce the veteran suicide rate of 20 per day and enable them to reintegrate successfully into society. Currently, the VA does not fund service dogs or recognize the use of service dogs as a viable method to treat PTSD. Nonprofit organizations like K9s For Warriors train and supply service dogs for qualifying veterans.

“The PAWS Act passing would be a victory for all American heroes suffering from the invisible wound of PTSD,” said Rory Diamond. “This symbolizes hope – not only for veterans themselves, but for everyone who loves them and is desperate to help them reclaim their lives.”

“It is heartbreaking that twenty veterans take their own lives each day,” said Congressman Rutherford. “We must do more to help those with PTSD and other service-connected forms of trauma. Providing service dogs to veterans is a proven therapy for PTSD, but for many, the cost associated with training and raising these animals is too great. The PAWS Act will support organizations who pair service dogs with veterans to help our warfighters lead productive and successful lives once they return to civilian life.”

The VA estimates that 11-20 percent of all Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have PTSD, 12% of Gulf War veterans have PTSD, and 30% of Vietnam veterans have PTSD. Additionally, other, non-combat veterans have PTSD resulting from traumas such as military sexual assault.¹

If passed, the PAWS Act would direct the VA to grant a voucher to each qualifying veteran to take to any service dog organization of their choosing.

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K9s For Warriors is a 501(c)3 dedicated to American warriors who have sacrificed their tomorrows for our todays.

114 Camp K9 Road • Ponte Vedra, Florida 32081 • (904) 686-1956 • Fax (904) 686-1957
Email: info@k9sforwarriors.org • www.k9sforwarriors.org

To schedule an interview with K9s For Warriors' CEO, as well as veterans with service dogs, please contact Brianna Bentov, BBentov@K9sForWarriors.org, or call 904.686.1956.

About K9s For Warriors

K9s For Warriors is the nation's largest provider of service dogs to military veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and/or Military Sexual Trauma (MST) as a result of military service post-9/11. The service dog program is unique and offers an innovative approach to recovering from the invisible wounds of war. Two lives are transformed with each pairing: the veteran reduces his/her risk of suicide while the rescue dog receives a newfound purpose.

Find more information at www.k9sforwarriors.org | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

1. U.S. Dept. of VA National Center for PTSD:
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp

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