

2017 HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HCR 3024

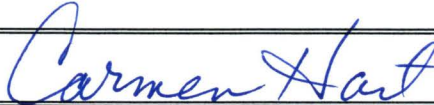
2017 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee Fort Union, State Capitol

HCR 3024
3/9/2017
28978

- Subcommittee
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature



Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

A concurrent resolution declaring June 27, 2017, as "Posttraumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day" and the month of June as "Posttraumatic Stress Injury Awareness Month"

Minutes:

Attachments 1-2

Chairman Kasper opened the hearing on HCR 3024.

Rep. Kathy Hogan appeared in support. Attachment 1. (:08-1:25)

Lt. Col Davina French, North Dakota National Guard, appeared in support. Attachment 2. (02:35-:07:11) She then read a letter written by Staff Sergeant Joseph Biel's best friend. (:07:39-:09:41) Continuing on with Attachment 2. (:09:42-:11:10)

Rep. Schneider: Could we have a copy of that letter.

Lt. Col. French: Yes.

Rep. Laning: Are you also proposing that we make this a continuous thing rather than a one-time recognition?

Lt. Col. French: I would like to make that suggestion in the same concept as Vietnam Veterans' Day.

Rep. Rohr: This is great, but I have a concern. There are so many other people out there that have posttraumatic stress injury not related to a military event.

Lt. Col. French: Line 15 of the resolution does address other things. I can only state from the military perspective.

Rep. Steiner: ND Cares was taken care of by First Lady Betsy Dalrymple for a while. Do you know where that is being cared for now?

Lt. Col. French: I belong to the executive committee and Connie Spryncznatyk is now the chairman of that committee and organization.

Chairman Kasper closed the hearing. There were two suggested amendments.

Rep. Laning: On Line 1 a concurrent resolution declaring June 27, 2017, and annually coinciding with Vietnam Veterans' Day thereafter as Posttraumatic ...

Chairman Kasper: Do you think this should be a stand alone, not a combination? June 27 is a special day recognized by Congress now?

Lt. Col. French: Yes. I just used the example of the Vietnam Veterans' Day, so June 27 is a stand alone day.

Rep. Laning: We could say June 27, 2017 and annually thereafter.

Rep. Dockter: If we strike out 2017, it would just say June 27.

Chairman Kasper: We could say as Rep. Laning indicated.

Rep. B. Koppelman: Striking out 2017 is okay as long as you have an emergency clause so it takes effect before that day. You would also want to do it on Page 2, Line 13.

Rep. Rohr: We need to be aware of the nonmilitary people that are suffering from posttraumatic stress. I propose the amendment. It would be to strike 2017 on Line 1, Page 1 and on Line 13, Page 2, and add an emergency clause.

Rep. Steiner seconded the motion.

Voice vote. Motion carried.

Rep. B. Koppelman: The second amendment would insert ND Cares, Dept. of Human Services on Page 1, Line 20. Also make it veterans, families, and survivors on Page 1, Line 22. I move the amendment.

Rep. Steiner seconded the motion.

Rep. Olson: Are we putting ND Cares after state agencies, because it is not a state agency?

There was some more discussion about placement of the wording. (:20:43-:21:56)

Voice vote. Motion carried.

Rep. Steiner made a motion for a DO PASS AS AMENDED on HCR 3024.

Rep. Karls seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken. 13 Yeas, 0 Nays, 1 Absent. **Rep. Laning** will carry the bill.

March 9, 2017

3/9/17
BWO
Taj

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3024

Page 1, line 1, after the second comma insert "and each June 27 thereafter,"

Page 1, line 2, after "June" insert "2017, and each June thereafter,"

Page 1, line 20, after the first comma insert "the North Dakota Cares Coalition and"

Page 1, line 20, after "including" insert "the Department of Human Services,"

Page 1, line 20, after "Health" insert a comma

Page 1, line 21, after "disaster" insert ", and their families"

Page 1, line 22, replace the first "and" with a comma

Page 1, line 22, after "families" insert ", and survivors"

Page 2, line 13, after the second comma insert "and each June 27 thereafter,"

Page 2, line 14, after "June" insert "2017, and each June thereafter,"

Renumber accordingly

Date: 3-9-17
 Roll Call Vote #: 1

**2017 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE
 ROLL CALL VOTES
 BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 3024**

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: _____

Recommendation: Adopt Amendment
 Do Pass Do Not Pass Without Committee Recommendation
 As Amended Rerefer to Appropriations
 Place on Consent Calendar
 Other Actions: Reconsider _____

Motion Made By Rohr Seconded By Steiner

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Jim Kasper-Chairman			Pamela Anderson		
Scott Louser-Vice Chairman			Mary Schneider		
Jason Dockter			<i>amendment / voice vote not motion carried</i>		
Craig A. Johnson					
Daniel Johnston					
Karen Karls					
Ben Koppelman					
Vernon Laning					
Christopher D. Olson					
Karen M. Rohr					
Vicky Steiner					
Steve Vetter					

Total (Yes) _____ No _____

Absent _____

Floor Assignment _____

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:
*Line 1, Page 1 strike 2017
 Line 13, Page 2 strike 2017
 Add emergency clause*

Date: 3-9-17
 Roll Call Vote #: 2

**2017 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE
 ROLL CALL VOTES
 BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 3024**

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: _____

Recommendation: Adopt Amendment
 Do Pass Do Not Pass Without Committee Recommendation
 As Amended Rerefer to Appropriations
 Place on Consent Calendar
 Other Actions: Reconsider _____

Motion Made By B. Koppelman Seconded By Steiner

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Jim Kasper-Chairman			Pamela Anderson		
Scott Louser-Vice Chairman			Mary Schneider		
Jason Dockter					
Craig A. Johnson					
Daniel Johnston					
Karen Karls					
Ben Koppelman					
Vernon Laning					
Christopher D. Olson					
Karen M. Rohr					
Vicky Steiner					
Steve Vetter					

*Amendment 2
 Voice vote
 motion carries*

Total (Yes) _____ No _____

Absent _____

Floor Assignment _____

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:
Insert ND Care, Dept. of Human Services
Page 1, Line 20
Page 1, Line 22 veterans, families &
their survivors

Date: 3-9-17
 Roll Call Vote #: 3

**2017 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE
 ROLL CALL VOTES
 BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 3024**

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: _____

Recommendation: Adopt Amendment
 Do Pass Do Not Pass Without Committee Recommendation
 As Amended Rerefer to Appropriations
 Place on Consent Calendar
 Other Actions: Reconsider _____

Motion Made By Steiner Seconded By Karls

Representatives	Yes	No	Representatives	Yes	No
Jim Kasper-Chairman	X		Pamela Anderson	X	
Scott Louser-Vice Chairman	A		Mary Schneider	X	
Jason Dockter	X				
Craig A. Johnson	X				
Daniel Johnston	X				
Karen Karls	X				
Ben Koppelman	X				
Vernon Laning	X				
Christopher D. Olson	X				
Karen M. Rohr	X				
Vicky Steiner	X				
Steve Vetter	X				

Total (Yes) 13 No 0

Absent _____

Floor Assignment Laning

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

HCR 3024: Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Rep. Kasper, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS AS FOLLOWS** and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (13 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HCR 3024 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

Page 1, line 1, after the second comma insert "and each June 27 thereafter,"

Page 1, line 2, after "June" insert "2017, and each June thereafter,"

Page 1, line 20, after the first comma insert "the North Dakota Cares Coalition and"

Page 1, line 20, after "including" insert "the Department of Human Services,"

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Renumber accordingly

2017 SENATE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

HCR 3024

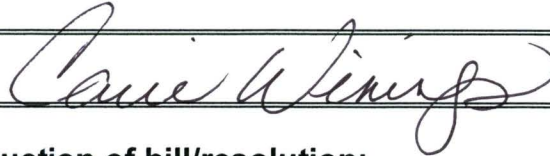
2017 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
Sheyenne River Room, State Capitol

HCR 3024
3/23/2017
Job Number 29596

- Subcommittee
 Conference Committee

Committee Clerk Signature



Explanation or reason for introduction of bill/resolution:

A concurrent resolution declaring June 27, 2017, and each June 27 thereafter, as "Posttraumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day" and the month of June 2017, and each June thereafter, as "Posttraumatic Stress Injury Awareness Month".

Minutes:

Attachments: 1-3

Chairman Poolman: Opened the hearing on HCR 3024.

Representative Hogan, District 21: See Attachment #1 for testimony to introduce and in support of the bill. This date was chosen in honor of a soldier that committed suicide in ND

(4:11) Senator Bekkedahl, District 1: Testified in favor of the bill. North Dakota has lead in this area. I have spent 22 years in the medical corps of the North Dakota National Guard, and I can tell you we were early on this because we needed to be. The national movement has picked that up. We were also early on in how we deal with our soldiers in this area. We have stand downs to talk about this with our units. We go into our medical missions, when we go to the units, where we have professional staff at those missions. Anyone that has concerns or needs are directed to those staff immediately. PTSI consults are a part of our process now.

(5:35) John Jacobson, Former Legislative Chair, North Dakota Veteran's Coordinating Council: Testified in favor of the bill. PTSI has been well defined and I don't think there is anyone that is not aware of it. I spent 30 years in Army Reserve and National Guard. I retired 22 years ago, and I enjoyed every moment of it. My unit was activated during the Desert Storm. I spent 3 months over in the Persian Gulf. It is such a worthy bill.

Chairman Poolman: You made a great point. A lot of people are aware of the issue, but I think we, in an awareness month, can talk about improving resources available for our veterans.

Chairman Poolman: No further testimony was present. Closed the hearing on HCR 3024.

Senator Meyer: Moved a Do Pass.

Senator Vedaa: Seconded.

A Roll Call Vote Was Taken: 6 yeas, 0 nays, 0 absent.

Motion Carried.

Senator Bekkedahl will carry the bill.

(See Attachments #2 and #3 for additional testimony provided to the committee.)

2017 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE
 ROLL CALL VOTES
 BILL/RESOLUTION NO. 3024

Senate Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Subcommittee

Amendment LC# or Description: _____

- Recommendation: Adopt Amendment
 Do Pass Do Not Pass Without Committee Recommendation
 As Amended Rerefer to Appropriations
 Place on Consent Calendar
 Other Actions: Reconsider _____

Motion Made By Meyer Seconded By Vedaa

Senators	Yes	No	Senators	Yes	No
Chairman Poolman	✓		Senator Marcellais	✓	
Vice Chairman Davison	✓				
Senator Bekkedahl	✓				
Senator Meyer	✓				
Senator Vedaa	✓				

Total (Yes) 6 No 0

Absent 0

Floor Assignment Bekkedahl

If the vote is on an amendment, briefly indicate intent:

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

HCR 3024, as engrossed: Government and Veterans Affairs Committee (Sen. Poolman, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). Engrossed HCR 3024 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar.

2017 TESTIMONY

HCR 3024

Attachment 1
3024
3-9-17

TESTIMONY
House Government and Veteran's Affairs Committee
HCR 3024
March 9, 2017
Representative Kathy Hogan

Chairman Kasper and Members of the Committee for the record, my name is Kathy Hogan and I represent District 21, the Heart of Fargo. I introduced this resolution at the request of a group called "*Honor for All*". A veteran's group committed to addressing the challenges of the veterans who have suffered significant brain trauma. Attached is a summary of the Honor for All effort to modify the terminology related to Post Traumatic Stress Injury. Similar resolutions are being introduced throughout the nation.

The *Honor for ALL* group provides a range of services to veterans suffering from PTSD including research, family support, public information and advocacy.

Thank you for your support and I am more than willing to answer any questions.

Background information from

Honor for ALL

Service members who fight for our nation and return home struggling with the effects of an invisible wound should not have to be additionally burdened by a stigma which labels their battle-borne injury a disorder. No one wants to be told they have a disorder, least of all a proud young veteran. Their most instinctive and immediate reaction is to deny it.

Denial interferes with timely treatment which can lead to dangerous, needless, and too often fatal, consequences.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURY – A WOUND NOT A WEAKNESS

Honor for ALL is dedicated to eliminating the stigma attached to post-traumatic stress, advancing its treatment, preserving the dignity of the injured, and above all, averting impulsive or dangerous behavior leading to suicide. Although we are a veterans organization, our concern is with all who suffer from the psychological and moral injuries now all grouped together under term Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

PTSD is a diagnostic term crafted in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association to commonly understand and treat veterans who had endured severe traumatic combat stress. Subsequent to the APA's adaption of this terminology it has now been shown, through intensive research involving electro-magnetic imaging, that post-traumatic stress can actually cause physical changes within the brain. These physical changes more accurately reflect an injury than a disorder – a wound not a weakness. Post-traumatic Stress Injury.

The use of the word "disorder" conveys a negative image which can by its nature discourage some from seeking care and others from caring.

The use of the "d-word" in relation to combat stress assails the sense of honor that should accompany any wound received by a service member in action against an enemy of the United States. Further, its use demeans the dignity of all

affected individuals, to include, but not be limited to: first responders; victims of abuse and crime; survivors and witnesses of life-threatening accidents and natural disaster; and all the loved ones thereof.

By introducing the word "injury" in the designation, we can begin to effectively diminish the stigma associated with invisible wounds and their perception as mental illness.

Further, in our efforts here, we do not wish in any way to cancel the distinction between common post-traumatic stress and the more disabling form of that condition.

As defined in the DSM under PTSD Criteria, paragraph A, it is normal to have post-traumatic stress (PTS) after experiencing a traumatic event. When symptoms persist for over a month and satisfy criteria B, C, D, E, F and G of the DSM formulation, the definitive components now signify DSM assigned PTSD.

A traumatized, yet uninjured, brain stays in appropriate alarm mode as needed, returning to normal within a month. An injured brain has been physically altered. Beyond common stress, this condition is a persistent disability that needs rehabilitation.

Our state by state campaign for PTSI awareness, originally started with the help of the Adjutant Generals Association of the United States (AGAUS) and the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), is now in its third year. In 2015 we were able to enlist the support of the US House of Representatives and 8 individual states either by legislative resolution and/or gubernatorial proclamation. In 2016, the House was joined by the US Senate and the number of states went up to 27. In three of those states, South Carolina, Virginia and New Jersey, resolutions were adopted making the assignment perennial. This year we hope to gather the support of the other 23 states to join with Congress in a unified effort to establish a truly national day of recognition and hasten the end of a long overdue indifference to a very old injustice.

Attachment 2
HCR 3024
3-9-17

TESTIMONY OF
LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVINA FRENCH
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
9 MARCH 2017
HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 3024

Good morning Mr. Chairman, I am Lieutenant Colonel Davina French, Government Affairs Officer for the Office of the Adjutant General. I am here today to testify in support of House Concurrent Resolution 3024, and to speak for those who do not have a voice.

There is an organization known as "Honor For All" that has been the driving force in a state-by-state campaign for the awareness of establishing June 27th as Posttraumatic Stress Injury Day and the entire month of June as Posttraumatic Stress Injury month. Overall there are 27 states that recognize these dates of support, with three of those adopting resolutions for automatic perennial adoption.

I would like to take this time to bring back memories of truly how amazing it is to be a service member from the State of North Dakota and honor the continued support we have received over the years. In 2010, North Dakota WAS THE STATE that originated the "National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day". This is the Senate record as read by Senator Kent Conrad:

SENATE RESOLUTION 541—DESIGNATING JUNE 27, 2010, AS "NATIONAL POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AWARENESS DAY"

*Mr. CONRAD submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary: S. RES. 541
Whereas the brave men and women of the*

United States Armed Forces, who proudly serve the United States, risk their lives to protect the freedom of the United States and deserve the investment of every possible resource to ensure their lasting physical, mental, and emotional well-being;

Whereas 12 percent of Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans, 11 percent of Operation Enduring Freedom veterans, 10 percent of Operation Desert Storm veterans, 30 percent of Vietnam veterans, and at least 8 percent of the general population of the United States suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (referred to in this preamble as "PTSD");

Whereas the incidence of PTSD in members of the military is rising as the United States Armed Forces conducts 2 wars, exposing hundreds of thousands of soldiers to traumatic life threatening events;

Whereas women, who are more than twice as likely to experience PTSD than men, are increasingly engaged in direct combat on the front lines, putting these women at even greater risk of PTSD;

Whereas—

*(1) from 2003 to 2007, approximately 40,000 Department of Defense patients were diagnosed with PTSD; and
(2) from 2000 to 2009—*

(A) more than 5,000 individuals were hospitalized with a primary diagnosis of PTSD; and

(B) more than 500,000 individuals were treated for PTSD in outpatient visits;

Whereas PTSD significantly increases the risk of depression, suicide, and drug and alcohol related disorders and deaths;

Whereas the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have made significant advances in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD and the symptoms of PTSD, but many challenges remain; and

Whereas the establishment of a National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day will raise public awareness about issues related to PTSD:

Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates June 27, 2010, as "National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day";

(2) urges the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense to continue working to educate servicemembers, veterans, the families of servicemembers and veterans, and the public about the causes, symptoms, and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder; and

(3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense.

Mr. CONRAD. "Mr. President, today I am submitting a Senate resolution to designate June 27, 2010, as National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day. That date was inspired by the birthday of North Dakota National Guard Staff Sergeant Joe Biel. Staff Sergeant Biel served two tours of duty in Iraq as a Trailblazer, part of a unit responsible for route clearance operations. Each day, Joe's mission was to go out with his unit every day to find and remove Improvised Explosive Devices and other dangers from heavily traveled roads to make it safe for coalition forces and Iraqi civilians to travel. As a result of those experiences, Joe suffered from PTSD and, tragically, took his own life in April 2007. For many, the war does not end when the warrior comes home.... And that is why I am introducing this Resolution. These efforts are about letting our troops—past and present—know it's okay to come forward and say they need help. It's a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek assistance. It is my hope that this message will be heard. "

Since our 2010 Congressional efforts in order to bring greater awareness to the issue of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the United States Senate designated June 27th as National PTSD Awareness Day. In addition, June has been designated as PTSD Awareness Month by the National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD).

As our state struggles with the availability of mental health services, particularly in extreme rural areas and the western region, it is important for those who struggle to understand that we are doing everything we can to provide assistance to the citizens of our state. It should be noted that ND Cares, a coalition of over 45 military and civilian entities are also dedicated to the support of North Dakota Service Members, Veterans, Families and Survivors are also creating awareness to make change.

I ask for a favorable vote on HCR 3024, and your acceptance of this resolution shows your continued support to those who need it most. Our citizen who chose to serve our country and their families.

Thank you, I stand for any questions.

JOE BIEL MEMORIAL BIKE RIDE

On April 26th 2007 we lost one of the best soldiers the United States Military and the North Dakota Army National Guard had ever had the privilege of enlisting. Staff Sergeant Joseph Arthur Biel took his own life in Devils Lake North Dakota surrounded by his peers superiors and some of his best friends. He shot himself in the mouth while these people looked on and his last words were "tell everybody I love them" the shot was heard as far away as Fargo North Dakota. Specialist David Young was on the phone with SSG Matthew Leaf while standing directly in front of SSG Biel as he pulled the trigger. This was the most horrific and worst day of our lives. Tears did not stop for 3 days as Joe's platoon (4th platoon A Company 164 Combat Engineers) deployed upon the small town of Devils Lake North Dakota. Everybody was asking one question "Why?" Why we failed Joe Biel? Why we did not understand PTSD? Why so many of us have problems when we return from overseas? Why nobody wants to listen? Why nobody understands? Why we are afraid to talk about it? Why we think nobody cares? Why can't I get help? Why will nobody listen to me? These are the questions that race through our minds after this tragedy. We deserve and have earned the right to be understood. The answer is too simple. PTSD is real and it needs to be addressed now. With the help of fellow veterans, spouses, loved ones, the V.A. and our Government. Please take the time to listen too and understand this disorder and at the very least be made aware of how this is affecting our Veterans and our lives, not just those who have served but all of the fine citizens of the United States. Maybe if we all take a minute to listen we can stop one more tragedy from ever happening again.

Sincerely SSG Matthew James Leaf,
North Dakota Army National Guard.

TESTIMONY
Senate Government and Veteran's Affairs Committee
HCR 3024
March 23, 2017
Representative Kathy Hogan

Chairman Poolman and Members of the Committee for the record, my name is Kathy Hogan and I represent District 21, the Heart of Fargo. I introduced this resolution at the request of a group called "Honor for All". A veteran's group committed to addressing the challenges of the veterans who have suffered significant brain trauma. Attached is a summary of the Honor for All effort to modify the terminology related to Post Traumatic Stress Injury. Similar resolutions are being introduced throughout the nation.

When I introduced this resolution, I did not know the history of this movement and the key role ND played in it. Others will share this story, but I am pleased that we can continue to be a small player in continuing to raise the awareness of PTSD.

The Honor for ALL group provides a range of services to veterans suffering from PTSD including research, family support, public information and advocacy.

Thank you for your support and I am more than willing to answer any questions.

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LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVINA FRENCH
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
9 MARCH 2017
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*Mr. CONRAD submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary: S. RES. 541
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United States Armed Forces, who proudly serve the United States, risk their lives to protect the freedom of the United States and deserve the investment of every possible resource to ensure their lasting physical, mental, and emotional well-being;

Whereas 12 percent of Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans, 11 percent of Operation Enduring Freedom veterans, 10 percent of Operation Desert Storm veterans, 30 percent of Vietnam veterans, and at least 8 percent of the general population of the United States suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (referred to in this preamble as "PTSD");

Whereas the incidence of PTSD in members of the military is rising as the United States Armed Forces conducts 2 wars, exposing hundreds of thousands of soldiers to traumatic life threatening events;

Whereas women, who are more than twice as likely to experience PTSD than men, are increasingly engaged in direct combat on the front lines, putting these women at even greater risk of PTSD;

Whereas—

*(1) from 2003 to 2007, approximately 40,000 Department of Defense patients were diagnosed with PTSD; and
(2) from 2000 to 2009—*

(A) more than 5,000 individuals were hospitalized with a primary diagnosis of PTSD; and

(B) more than 500,000 individuals were treated for PTSD in outpatient visits;

Whereas PTSD significantly increases the risk of depression, suicide, and drug and alcohol related disorders and deaths;

Whereas the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have made significant advances in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of PTSD and the symptoms of PTSD, but many challenges remain; and

Whereas the establishment of a National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day will raise public awareness about issues related to PTSD:

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(1) designates June 27, 2010, as "National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day";

(2) urges the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense to continue working to educate servicemembers, veterans, the families of servicemembers and veterans, and the public about the causes, symptoms, and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder; and

(3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense.

Mr. CONRAD. "Mr. President, today I am submitting a Senate resolution to designate June 27, 2010, as National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day. That date was inspired by the birthday of North Dakota National Guard Staff Sergeant Joe Biel. Staff Sergeant Biel served two tours of duty in Iraq as a Trailblazer, part of a unit responsible for route clearance operations.

Each day, Joe's mission was to go out with his unit every day to find and remove Improvised Explosive Devices and other dangers from heavily traveled roads to make it safe for coalition forces and Iraqi civilians to travel. As a result of those experiences, Joe suffered from PTSD and, tragically, took his own life in April 2007.

For many, the war does not end when the warrior comes home.... And that is why I am introducing this Resolution. These efforts are about letting our troops—past and present—know it's okay to come forward and say they need help. It's a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek assistance. It is my hope that this message will be heard. "

Since our 2010 Congressional efforts in order to bring greater awareness to the issue of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the United States Senate designated June 27th as National PTSD Awareness Day. In addition, June has been designated as PTSD Awareness Month by the National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD).

As our state struggles with the availability of mental health services, particularly in extreme rural areas and the western region, it is important for those who struggle to understand that we are doing everything we can to provide assistance to the citizens of our state. It should be noted that ND Cares, a coalition of over 45 military and civilian entities are also dedicated to the support of North Dakota Service Members, Veterans, Families and Survivors are also creating awareness to make change.

I ask for a favorable vote on HCR 3024, and your acceptance of this resolution shows your continued support to those who need it most. Our citizen who chose to serve our country and their families.

Thank you, I stand for any questions.

JOE BIEL MEMORIAL BIKE RIDE

On April 26th 2007 we lost one of the best soldiers the United States Military and the North Dakota Army National Guard had ever had the privilege of enlisting.

Staff Sergeant Joseph Arthur Biel took his own life in Devils Lake North Dakota surrounded by his peers, superiors and some of his best friends. He shot himself in the mouth while these people looked on and his last words were “tell everybody I love them” the shot was heard as far away as Fargo North Dakota. Specialist David Young was on the phone with SSG Matthew Leaf while standing directly in front of SSG Biel as he pulled the trigger.

This was the most horrific and worst day of our lives. Tears did not stop for 3 days as Joe's platoon (4th platoon A Company 164 Combat Engineers) deployed upon the small town of Devils Lake North Dakota. Everybody was asking one question "Why?"

- Why we failed Joe Biel?
- Why we did not understand PTSD?
- Why so many of us have problems when we return from overseas?
- Why nobody wants to listen? Why nobody understands?
- Why we are afraid to talk about it?
- Why we think nobody cares?
- Why can't I get help?
- Why will nobody listen to me?

These are the questions that race through our minds after this tragedy. We deserve and have earned the right to be understood.

The answer is too simple... PTSD is real and it needs to be addressed now. With the help of fellow veterans, spouses, loved ones, the V.A. and our Government. Please take the time to listen too and understand this disorder and at the very least be made aware of how this is affecting our Veterans and our lives, not just those who have served but all of the fine citizens of the United States. Maybe if we all take a minute to listen we can stop one more tragedy from ever happening again.

Sincerely SSG Matthew James Leaf,
North Dakota Army National Guard.