

THE BIG FOUR LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2024

Priority 1: Resolution to Reduce Veteran Suicide

Veterans have dutifully served our nation, safeguarding its security and upholding our freedoms. Many of these courageous individuals bear invisible wounds resulting from their service, necessitating treatment on par with physical injuries. Unfortunately, such treatment is often inaccessible. A concerted effort is imperative to provide the necessary support for these veterans. Less than half of returning veterans in need of mental health treatment receive it, primarily due to persistent stigma and barriers such as limited access and extended wait times.

Priority 2: Equal Tuition Remission for Disabled Veteran's Children

Eliminate the 2011 amendments linking the disability rating of the Veteran to the amount of tuition remission granted to their children. Remove the condition requiring veterans to have served in a war zone, recognizing that Veterans lack control over their deployment locations. A veteran disabled in any military capacity remains a "service-connected disabled veteran."

Priority 3: State Sponsored Life Insurance Program for the National Guard

Given the increased deployment and state duty requirements for the Indiana National Guard, essential as first responders to disasters, state emergencies, and military activations, it is imperative to ensure the protection of Guard members' families. A cost-effective benefit should be extended to all Guard families, acknowledging their significant sacrifices for the welfare of our State and Nation.

Priority 4: Access to State Parks for Veterans

Initiate measures to reduce suicide among veterans by granting all current and former service members complimentary access to Indiana State Parks. Recognizing the therapeutic benefits of nature, this initiative draws inspiration from historical practices such as horticulture therapy prescribed for soldiers returning from World Wars. Outdoor experiences have proven to lower blood pressure, heart rate, cortisol levels, reduce stress and anxiety, and enhance cognitive function, offering a valuable avenue for self-restoration.

Priority 5: Additional Revenue for Veteran Service Organizations

Authorize Veteran Service Organizations to utilize electronic pull tabs. These electronic pull tabs function similarly to conventional ones. The resultant increase in revenue will play a pivotal role in preserving numerous VSO Posts, enabling them to sustain active involvement in their respective communities.

We believe that these legislative priorities address critical issues facing our veterans and their families. Your support in championing these initiatives will not only honor the service of our veterans but also contribute to the well-being of our communities.