



WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT®

PROJECT ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022

Welcome to the Volume 3, Issue 2 of Wounded Warrior Project Advocacy News, a policy update from Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP). WWP's advocacy efforts connect you and your fellow warriors with your elected officials, providing you a voice in our nation's capital, and empowering you to discuss the issues that matter most to the post-9/11 veteran community.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Toxic
Exposures

Invictus Games
Reception

Interview with The Honorable
Denis Richard McDonough,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

LETTER FROM OUR VP

Greetings, and welcome to this quarter’s policy update from Wounded Warrior Project (WWP).

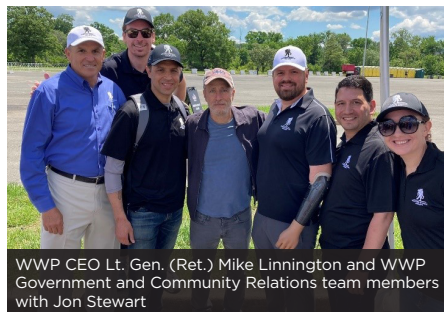
The period of May through July brings opportunities to reflect on the bravery and service of warriors and families around the country. From Armed Forces Day and Memorial Day in May to Flag Day in June and Independence Day in July, the reminders of service and sacrifice are front of mind.

I want to express my gratitude for all those who continue to honor those who served and the sacrifices of those we have lost. Part of how I try to honor those we have lost is by continuing my dedication to service in my daily life, a trademark shared by many veterans. I am humbled to be able to work with so many distinguished and passionate veterans every day.



This month, the courage and dedication of warriors was on full display during WWP’s annual Soldier Ride® event in Washington, DC. This event helps wounded veterans overcome their physical challenges and discover a sense of community with their fellow riders. We were especially grateful to President Joe Biden, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, and the White House staff for welcoming our team and warriors, listening to their stories, and taking the time to think about how we can continue to best serve veterans in their everyday lives.

One way we can support veterans is by ensuring those exposed to burn pits and toxic substances while serving have access to health care and benefits. After more than four years of sustained work with Congress and veterans service advocates, the Senate passed the *Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our PACT Act* (H.R. 3967) by a vote of 84-14. This is an incredible accomplishment! WWP’s advocacy push culminated in a recent event to urge Senate passage. Over Memorial Day Weekend, WWP was proud to participate in a “Pass the PACT Act Rally DC” gathering and press event at the Rolling to Remember demonstration in Washington, DC. Speaking alongside a coalition of Veterans Service Organizations and comedian and activist Jon Stewart, WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington highlighted the need to address the residual effects of toxic exposure among veterans. [Read on](#) for more about WWP’s most recent work to help pass this historic legislation.



WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington and WWP Government and Community Relations team members with Jon Stewart

While we celebrate this milestone, WWP’s advocacy team remains hard at work fighting for issues that matter most to the veteran community, including new efforts to provide support for women veterans and caregivers. We will continue to work with Members of Congress to ensure that these and other necessary policies are passed and enacted, and as always, we thank you for the opportunity to be a voice for veterans.

To honor and empower,
Jose Ramos

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from our VP

WWP Government Affairs Update1

Toxic Exposure

Wounded Warrior Project Gets Results on Toxic Exposure Legislation.....2

Women Veterans

Wounded Warrior Project Advocates for Women Veterans.....3

Soldier Ride DC

Twenty-Seven Warriors Take Part in Soldier Ride DC4

Q&A

The Honorable Denis Richard McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs6

Partnership Event

Invictus Games Reception9

VA Partner Spotlight

The “OPRA” Implant System Provides New Mobility Options for Wounded Veterans.....10

Grassroots

Warrior Advocate Spotlight: WWP Alumnus Charles Henry, Sr. San Antonio, Texas11

Roundtable with The Honorable Donald Remy, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs12

Contact & Resources13

TOXIC EXPOSURE



Wounded Warrior Project Gets Results on Toxic Exposure Legislation

This spring, Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) executed one of the largest and most effective lobbying and grassroots-mobilization campaigns in its nearly 20-year history.

The campaign helped build support for [H.R. 3967](#), the *Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act* – legislation that would finally guarantee health care and benefits for veterans who were exposed to toxic substances while serving our nation.

The campaign kicked off on April 20 with a news conference and rally at WWP’s headquarters in Jacksonville, FL. Several hundred WWP teammates and local veterans attended the event, as did reporters from local news stations and staff members of Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL), Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL), and Rep. Al Lawson (D-FL-05).

“For years, millions of post-9/11 veterans were exposed to open-air burn pits,” WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington said at the April 20 event. “The military used burn pits to dispose of trash, spent munitions, equipment, and pretty much everything needed in often remote theaters of operation. These burn pits often resulted in huge plumes of black, toxic smoke that many Service men and women then inhaled into their bodies.”

“**These prolonged exposures have serious health consequences—cancers, disabling respiratory conditions, and other illnesses. And far too many who are suffering still lack access to the health care and benefits they need because they can’t prove that their health problems are connected to their service. This cannot continue.**”

– Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington, WWP CEO

Army veteran Andrew Myatt of Arlington, Virginia spoke at the news conference about his exposure to toxic substances, as well as the serious health impacts that he witnessed among his fellow former Service members. He was diagnosed with a rare leukemia in 2019 after a routine physical.

“**I didn’t initially connect my cancer to my time in the military, even though I had skin rashes and coughed up brown stuff for years after returning to the U.S. I was fortunate to have good health care from my job...but many veterans don’t have that access to health care. That’s why this bill is so important.**”

– Andrew Myatt, Army veteran

After the event, Marine Corps veteran and WWP teammate Jeremy Matthews joined veteran advocate and entertainer Jon Stewart to speak with additional journalists via Zoom.

In conjunction with this event, WWP also helped generate a flood of emails to U.S. Senators by issuing e-mail action alerts to more than 200,000 Alumni and family members and sharing the news with WWP supporters on social media.

Following the Jacksonville news conference, outreach to U.S. Senators, and WWP’s [participation in the “Pass the PACT Act Rally DC.”](#) on June 16, the Senate passed legislation to improve health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances during their military service. The bill must now pass through a few more procedural steps before going back to the House for a final vote. WWP will continue advocating for swift passage of this key legislation.

Your help was vital in engaging our nation’s leaders on this important issue to help ensure that veterans fighting the effects of toxic exposure have access to the health care and disability compensation they need and deserve.



Army veteran Andrew Myatt speaks about his personal exposure to toxic substances

WOMEN VETERANS

Wounded Warrior Project Advocates for Women Veterans

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) has continued to prioritize and advocate on behalf of women veterans. These past few months, the Government Affairs team has met with 35 Capitol Hill offices to discuss several pieces of priority legislation for this ever-growing population, which include the following:

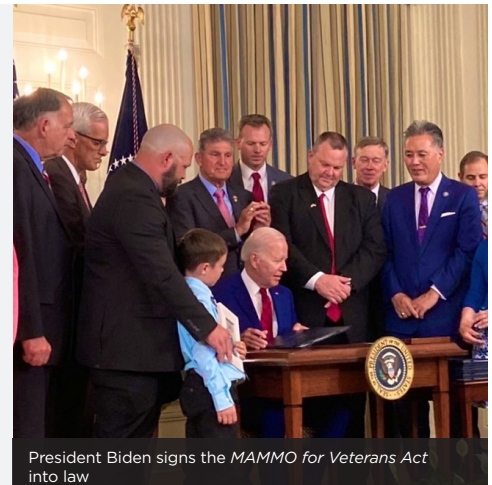


Women warriors and WWP Government Affairs Specialist Lindsey Stanford meet with House Veterans' Affairs Health Subcommittee Chairwoman Julia Brownley (D-CA-26)



Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options (MAMMO) for Veterans Act (H.R. 4794/S. 2533).

Over 700 women are diagnosed with breast cancer at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) every year, but 15 states offer no in-house mammography services. The *MAMMO for Veterans Act* upgrades and expands access to breast cancer screening and care for veterans across the country. Following months of advocacy efforts, the *MAMMO for Veterans Act* was signed into law on June 7. Women are the fastest-growing demographic across the veteran community, and this landmark victory for women veterans will make lifesaving improvements.



President Biden signs the *MAMMO for Veterans Act* into law



VA Peer Support Enhancement for Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Survivors Act (H.R. 2724).

This bill establishes a peer support program for MST survivors by requiring VA to ensure every individual who files a claim relating to MST is assigned a peer support specialist. At WWP, seven out of 10 women warriors say they experienced MST during their time in service, according to the Annual Warrior Survey. Many of these women cite difficulties with mental health, their transitions to civilian life, and with receiving adequate care and benefits in the aftermath. The *VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act* will provide MST survivors with support and resources as they navigate the difficult benefits process. This bill passed the House of Representatives in May, was introduced in the Senate on June 22, and is now awaiting further action in the Senate.

Other pieces of women veteran-focused legislation supported by WWP include the *Service members and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act (H.R. 5666/S. 3025)*, the *Veteran Infertility Treatment Act (H.R. 1957)*, and the *Women Veterans Transitional Residence Utilizing Support and Treatment (TRUST) Act (H.R. 344)*. These bills would provide additional vital services, such as further expanding VA health care and benefits for MST survivors, providing health care coverage for infertility treatment, and establishing a program to help treat and rehabilitate women veterans with drug and alcohol dependency.

This past February, a group of women warriors virtually met with their Members of Congress to discuss these pieces of legislation and share their stories. The Government Affairs team is currently planning to fly women warriors to Washington, DC this fall to continue making their voices heard on Capitol Hill and keep the momentum going on these important initiatives.

SOLDIER RIDE DC



“Remember on this ride today, you’re not alone. You have the support of a grateful nation behind you today and every day. We are here to help—help each other and help you cross the finish line together.”

President Joe Biden

President Biden greets warriors.



Warriors prepare to ride at the White House.

Twenty-Seven Warriors Take Part in Soldier Ride DC

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) held its annual Soldier Ride Washington, DC event the week of June 20. This unique, multi-day event incorporates skill-building practices at all ability levels in a supportive environment, serving as a reminder that warriors never ride alone; they move forward together, as a unit, just as they did during their military service.

Since its inception, Soldier Ride events across the country have grown to incorporate a variety of physical activity options, including traditional and adaptive road biking, mountain biking, skiing, snowboarding, virtual events, and skill development camps. Soldier Ride DC not only connects warriors from all walks of life, but also allows them to experience the history and beauty of the nation’s Capital firsthand.

[Continue reading >](#)



VA Secretary Denis McDonough joins warriors for a private dinner honoring the group.

SOLDIER RIDE DC (CONT.)



Warriors celebrate a day of riding through Annapolis, MD.

Twenty-seven warriors worked together to build their skills and, for some of the most recently injured warriors, gain the confidence and learn about resources and opportunities to flourish when they get home.

Highlights from this year included the following events:

- ★ On June 21, warriors participated in a bike fitting to prepare for a series of rides throughout the week.
- ★ On June 22, warriors rode a 15-mile course in Annapolis, MD, and joined the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Denis Richard McDonough, at a private dinner honoring the group.
- ★ On June 23, warriors met with President Joe Biden, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff at the White House. The tradition of Soldier Ride participants meeting with the commander in chief began in 2008 and has continued annually, with a brief pause during the COVID-19 pandemic; this marked the first time since the start of the pandemic that warriors were able to attend an in-person event at the White House.
- ★ On June 24, warriors wrapped up a week of Soldier Ride events with a 16-mile ride through Mason Neck, Virginia.

WWP would like to thank all of the warriors, the Biden administration, Sec. McDonough, and the staff who supported these events for such a productive, fun, and inspiring week.

“On behalf of those we serve, we thank President Biden for graciously welcoming and recognizing the service and sacrifice of wounded, ill, and injured warriors. The effects of war can last a lifetime—as we see with physical injuries, trauma, and illnesses from toxic exposure. Soldier Ride gives warriors the opportunity to connect and build camaraderie with their peers while allowing Wounded Warrior Project to spread awareness about their needs to the greater community. We are thankful to the president, the first lady, and the public for their tremendous support.”

Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington, WWP CEO



Warriors gather in front of the White House.



Army veteran Danielle Greene shares her personal story at the White House.



President Biden meets with warriors.

To learn more about Soldier Ride opportunities near you, please visit <http://woundedwarriorproject.org/programs/soldier-ride>.

Q&A



VA Secretary Denis McDonough



Sec. McDonough meets WWP's Chiefs and Board to give a special address

The Honorable Denis Richard McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Q You have served in many distinct public service positions, including in the U.S. House of Representatives as a Professional Staff Member, on the National Security Council, and as the Chief of Staff for President Barack Obama from 2013-2017 where you helped lead the administration's work on behalf of military families and veterans. What first drew you to a career in public service, and what does it mean to you to be the 11th Secretary of Veterans Affairs?

A: Simply put, it's the honor and privilege of a lifetime. There's no greater mission in federal government than our mission at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which is to serve veterans as well as they've served us.

Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors are the heart of America, having dedicated their lives to serving and sacrificing for this country—for all of us—in the times when we've needed them most. Now, it's our job at VA to serve them as well as they have served us by delivering timely access to world-class health care and earned benefits. President Biden calls that our nation's sacred obligation to veterans, and I am honored to work alongside our VA teammates to fight like hell to fulfill that obligation every day.

Q While VA has four specific missions, most veterans view the VA's role as being responsible for administering benefit and health care programs for veterans, their families, and their survivors. What are VA's top priorities and what new VA initiatives should every veteran be aware of?

A: Everything we do at VA boils down to delivering timely access to world-class care and benefits to veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. And doing that takes many forms: it means helping save lives and improve the health of our nation's veterans; it means delivering the survivor and disability benefits that veterans have earned and deserve; and it means honoring veterans with a lasting resting place befitting their service.

More specifically, our top priorities at VA include improving the quality and timeliness of care; delivering benefits to veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic exposures; decreasing the claims backlog; meeting the needs of caregivers who tirelessly care for our veterans; ending veteran suicide; ending veteran homelessness; and much, much more.

On a regular basis, the dedicated staff at VA are introducing new programs to deliver on these priorities, and I invite all veterans to go to VA.gov—or reach out to us for care or benefits—to learn more about what VA can do for you. We are here for you, and we are ready to help.

Q&A (CONT.)

Q An estimated 3.5 million veterans have been exposed to contaminants such as burn pits, toxic fragments, radiation, and other hazardous materials during deployment, and many are now suffering severe, rare, and early-onset health conditions. Last year, VA announced it would recognize asthma, rhinitis, and sinusitis as conditions presumed to be caused by exposure to particulate matter in Southwest Asia and began processing disability claims for veterans suffering from these conditions due to military service. Most recently, you announced that nine rare cancers would be added to this list. You have led VA's efforts on toxic exposure reform. Why do you believe that this topic is so important?

A: When veterans fought for us overseas, many of them were breathing in toxic fumes and particulate matter. Later, many of those veterans developed conditions that followed them home—impacting or taking their lives long after the final bullets of war were fired. It's our job to provide those veterans with benefits and care for those conditions, but for far too long, those veterans haven't gotten what they deserve. Under President Biden, those days are over. Over. We will keep our promise to those veterans, and get them the care and benefits they've earned—as fast as humanly possible.

As you noted, we've made progress for veterans by establishing presumptions of service connection for asthma, rhinitis, sinusitis, and nine rare respiratory cancers. These presumptives make President Biden the first President to proactively address particulate exposure for the veterans who have fought our wars for the past 30 years. And—more importantly—these presumptives mean that thousands of veterans are finally getting the benefits they're owed, with many more to come.

And look, those actions are just the beginning. We at VA wholeheartedly support the *Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act*, which the President called for as a part of the Unity Agenda in his State of the Union Address. This bill would add many new presumptives for toxic exposures and bring up to 3.5 million additional veterans into VA care—which is a great thing, because veterans in VA care do better. The passage of this bill will be a monumental day for veterans and VA, and we look forward to President Biden signing it into law.

Q You have stated that caregivers are a top priority for VA and appointed the Department's first-ever Senior Advisor for Families, Caregivers, and Survivors. When looking at the ways VA currently supports this population and what more it can do in the future, what is your vision to best serve caregivers?

A: Caregivers are the unsung heroes of VA's efforts to deliver care to our veterans. They are the connective tissue that links the care that our doctors and nurses provide and the daily care that veterans need to stay healthy. That's why we're doing everything we can to support them, including offering peer support, mental health counseling, respite, and more through our Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS). Our Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers additional supports and services for those who qualify, including a stipend and access to health insurance.

We're also listening to caregivers' concerns and making sure the PCAFC provides caregivers the support they need to care for veterans. Currently, VA is working to expand eligibility for PCAFC to eligible veterans from all eras of service, and Phase II of this expansion will launch on October 1, 2022. While we work to expand, we're also reviewing our current eligibility requirements and processes to make sure they are transparent, equitable, and consistent. Most importantly, we're working to ensure PCAFC meets the needs of family caregivers and the veterans they care for. While VA is reviewing eligibility and stipend level criteria, VA will not discharge or decrease any support to legacy and post-expansion participants based on reassessment under the criteria being reviewed.



Sec. McDonough celebrates the launch of the Hidden Helpers Coalition, a multi-organization coalition co-chaired by WWP committed to improving support for children and youth caregivers

Q&A (CONT.)

Q Wounded Warrior Project survey data reveals that caregivers and family support members have a strong preference for receiving mental health care through telehealth; in fact, 72 percent of family support members prefer telemental health care compared to 16 percent who prefer receiving care in-person. VA has also experienced a rapid increase in telemental health care interest and demand among veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic. What do you see as the future of telehealth and telemental health at VA?

A: Veterans overwhelmingly approve of VA's expanded use of telehealth medicine as part of our robust effort to continue to provide care to veterans during the pandemic. Since 2020, we have seen the use of video telehealth increase across the system from 2,500 appointments a day before the pandemic to more than 41,000 appointments a day. That's not going anywhere—moving forward, I believe that telehealth will continue to be an integral part of how we deliver timely and quality care to veterans.

Having said that, we also understand that telehealth is not the preferred way of receiving care for many veterans—and sometimes it may not be the appropriate way to conduct certain appointments. That is why we are developing telehealth capabilities as a way to add more options available to veterans and not, by any means, a way to replace all traditional one-on-one doctor visits.

It's also worth pointing out that telehealth comes with its own challenges, namely that veterans who do not have broadband access or the right technology could be effectively shut out of taking advantage of this option. That's why, in addition to expanding telehealth, we are also working to expand broadband access in underserved or remote communities as well as providing more than 58,000 tablet devices to veterans in order to access telehealth.



Sec. McDonough meets with Veterans Service Organization leaders, including WWP's Vice President of Government and Community Relations Jose Ramos



VA Secretary Denis McDonough and WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington hold up a WWP Soldier Ride jersey

Q You have championed efforts to help end veteran homelessness. VA surpassed its goals for 2021, getting more than 700 veterans in Los Angeles, CA into temporary or permanent housing by the end of last year. What do you hope to accomplish in 2022?

A: The words “homeless veteran” should not exist in our vocabulary. While we have been encouraged with our recent push to help homeless veterans in LA, we know there's more work to be done. I recently set a goal for VA to place 38,000 veterans into permanent housing by the end of this year. Achieving this goal will require the coordination of all VA programs and commitment of all VA staff—a team that continues to impress me with their creativity, empathy, and unwavering commitment to housing veterans no matter what challenges they face.

Recent data shows that since 2016, progress towards ending veteran homelessness has stalled. Veteran homelessness declined by 47 percent between 2010 and 2016 but slowed to only 6 percent between 2016 to 2020. We will achieve this goal by following the evidence-based Housing First model that prioritizes getting people into permanent housing as quickly as possible while providing supportive services, such as physical and mental health care, intensive case management, and referrals to other social supports. We will honor each veteran's choice of needs and housing placement, lead with equity, and will not rest until every veteran has a safe and permanent place to call home.

Anyone who wants to learn more about VA's mission to end veteran homelessness can do so at <https://www.va.gov/homeless>

PARTNERSHIP EVENT



Invictus Games athletes with VA Deputy Secretary Donald Remy and WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington

Invictus Games Reception

On April 12, Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) was proud to host a send-off dinner for the 61 athletes representing the U.S. in the Invictus Games in the Netherlands—the first to take place since 2019.

Started in 2014 by Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and former captain in the British Army, this international sporting event brings together wounded, injured, and sick Service men and women from around the world, including both veterans and those currently serving in their militaries. This year, more than 500 competitors from 20 nations competed in events such as archery, volleyball, track, wheelchair basketball, indoor rowing, powerlifting, and swimming.

Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Donald Remy attended the opening send-off reception and spoke to attendees and the athletes. WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington provided remarks during the dinner portion of the event to approximately 150 attendees, including Yvette Bourcicot, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army-Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA); Major General (MGEN) Kris Belanger, Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for M&RA; and Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Daniel Hendrex, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC).

The event was emceed by Patty Collins, a Paralympian (2016) in the sport of triathlon. Jen Lee, a three-time Paralympian (2014, 2018, 2022) and three-time gold medalist in the sport of ice hockey, delivered the keynote, focusing on the power of athletes within the military community. While each athlete is a strong individual performer, Lee highlighted that the team's true strength comes not from each individual performer,

but from Team USA collectively. She also shared her experience that the friendship and bonds formed through the Invictus Games last a lifetime, just like in military service.

Almost half of Team USA are registered WWP warriors, and many developed their skills in modified athletic opportunities through WWP's Adaptive Sports, Physical Health and Wellness, and Soldier Ride programs.

“ I am extremely proud of our athletes for making it to the Invictus Games. For many, this long journey as a competitor in adaptive sports began during service after an injury.”

— James Herrera, WWP Physical Health & Wellness vice president

Gabriel George, a retired Navy corpsman known as the “One-Armed Archer,” joined WWP in 2015 after a motorcycle accident resulted in the amputation of his left arm. George represented Team USA for the first time in adaptive archery, swimming, and rowing.

“ People see me doing sports and ask me how. The answer is simple: I could not do all that I do without the support of WWP. Ninety percent of the time, I am in pain, but I always have an event to look forward to and other warriors to help.”

— Gabriel George, retired Navy corpsman

As Prince Harry noted in his opening remarks at the games, “Your actions prove the impossible is in fact possible. And your continued service encourages others to give back and serve in their own way. With whatever you carry, with whatever may weigh you down, it is here at the Invictus Games that you realize it wasn't a weight after all—it was the springboard that propelled you to the next level. To being the best version of yourself.”



VA Deputy Secretary Donald Remy speaks at the Invictus Games send-off reception

VA PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

The “OPRA” Implant System Provides New Mobility Options for Wounded Veterans

Warriors who have suffered a limb amputation because of their service wounds know firsthand how long and arduous the recovery process can be and how finding the right prosthesis to fit their injury can be just as burdensome. For wounded veterans in need of a leg prosthesis, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is offering a new implant system that can revolutionize mobility and accessibility.

The newly approved Osseoanchored Prostheses for the Rehabilitation of Amputees, or “OPRA” implant system, is designed for patients with above-knee amputations who have had rehabilitation problems with a conventional (socket-based suspension) prosthesis. This new system provides a mechanism for the direct skeletal attachment of an artificial limb to the residual limb and

eliminates the need for a socket. For many veterans, this new system offers great advantages, including improved range-of-motion, reduced skin irritation, and enhanced comfort.

Like any treatment for advanced traumatic injuries, the OPRA implant system requires extensive surgery, recovery, and rehabilitation, and comes with its own risks of complications. However, for qualifying patients, it can create new opportunities for mobility and recovery.

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) remains committed to making sure veterans receive all the care and rehabilitation they need, and that VA continues to utilize all the latest technological advances in their treatment. If you are interested in learning more about OPRA implants and think you may qualify for this treatment, contact your local amputation care provider at the VA Medical Center where you receive services. As always, WWP is available to provide guidance for any veterans considering their treatment options and stands ready to provide assistance for any veterans on the road to recovery.

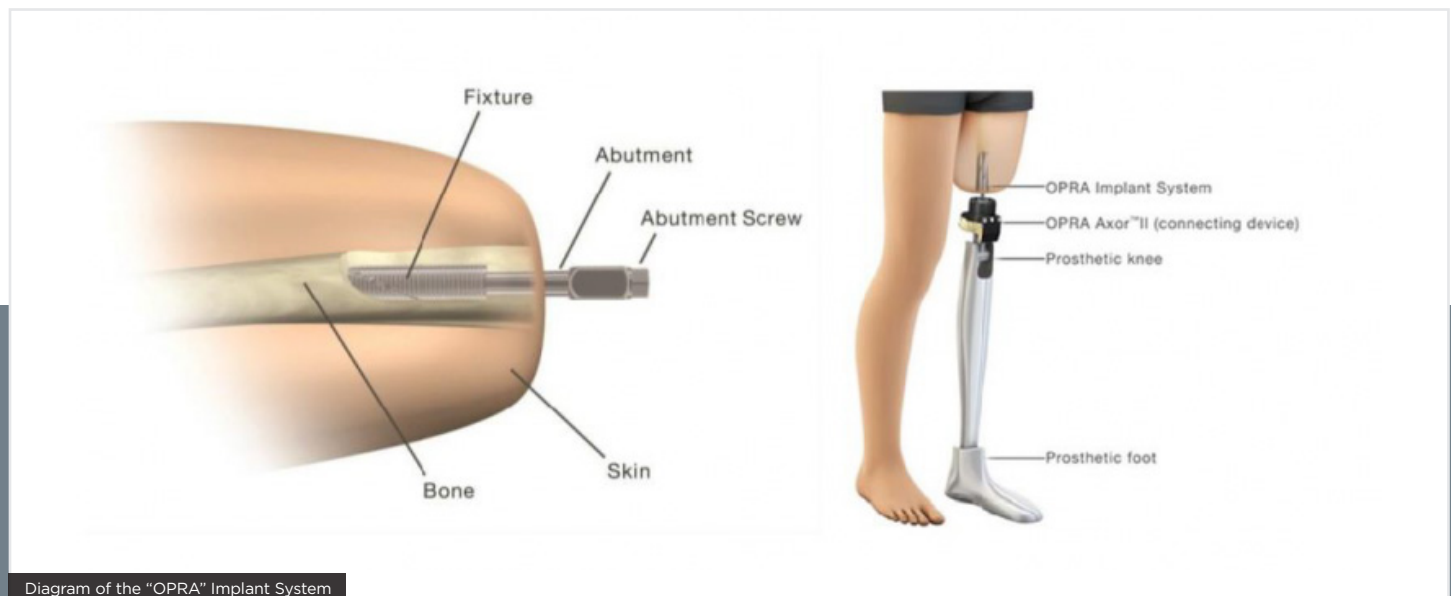


Diagram of the “OPRA” Implant System

Contact Information:

To request additional information or to be considered for the OPRA™ Implant System, please contact **Joseph B. Webster, M.D.**; National Medical Director for the VHA Amputation System of Care at **(804) 675-5648** or by email joseph.webster@va.gov.

For more information about the Amputation System of Care go to **Amputation System of Care (ASoC)** (<https://www.rehab.va.gov/asoc>) - **Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services (va.gov)**.

GRASSROOTS

Warrior Advocate Spotlight: WWP Alumnus Charles Henry, Sr. San Antonio, Texas

Q You recently participated in Operation Advocacy—a virtual “Fly-In” organized by Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) to meet with congressional staff in support of veterans issues. What was most memorable about this experience?

The most impactful aspect of this advocacy experience was the opportunity to connect with like-minded veterans who all answered the call to continue to serve and help their fellow veterans upon our return home.

Q What was it like talking with congressional staff?

It was a great experience to meet with the congressional offices because they were truly interested in listening to the needs of veterans.

Q What new skills or lessons did you learn as a result of participating?

The lessons and skills learned while participating were the ones we had learned during our military service. That is the ability to be patient, listen across the aisle, and work with people from all different backgrounds—a skill that Service members learn early on in our military careers.

Q Why is advocacy important to you?

As a member of the post-9/11 generation, I wanted to ensure I did my part in helping my fellow veterans in their transition home. Actively petitioning Congress for policies and legislation that would help my fellow brothers and sisters upon their return home was an obligation to my fellow veterans.



Charles Mario Henry, Sr., served in the U.S. Army from 2008-2011 and deployed with 101st Airborne Air Assault, 96th Aviation Support Battalion to Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2010. Charles owns Henry & Co. Consulting in San Antonio and is the founder of The House of Henry Foundation. In addition, Charles has served as a veterans advocate for 12 years, traveling the nation to support post-9/11 veterans and advocate for increased opportunities for and access to entrepreneurship, disability benefits, and education programs to better assist their financial futures and transition home.

Q What has this experience motivated you to do moving forward?

This experience has motivated me to continue petitioning and answering the call wherever I am needed. I will live my life-long mission and mantra of “Service Before Self” to ensure a better future for all veterans.

Q Do you have a message you would like to share with fellow veterans about getting involved in grassroots advocacy?

I would like to charge every veteran to answer the call and commit to a life of service. Service doesn't end when we get out of the military; it is just beginning.

GRASSROOTS (CONT.)

Roundtable with The Honorable Donald Remy, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) recently welcomed Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Donald Remy to its San Antonio office to engage with WWP Alumni, Veterans Service Organizations, and other stakeholders from the local community.

Deputy Secretary Remy talked with attendees about a range of subjects, including but not limited to toxic exposure; the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical supply chain obstacles; VA staffing shortages; community care; and VA communication channels. San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg was also in attendance.

In addition to WWP Alumni present, organizations and companies that participated included the Green Beret Foundation, United States Automobile Association (USAA), the San Antonio Veterans Council, the Grunt Style Foundation, Independent Rough Terrain Center, the City of San Antonio, and the Semper Fi Fund.



VA Deputy Secretary Donald Remy with WWP warrior and Alumni Deputy Director Brian Neuman

“It was great to have the opportunity to engage face-to-face with VA Deputy Secretary Donald Remy and to have an open platform to discuss important issues facing our veteran community. The biggest takeaway I had from the roundtable was his encouragement of veterans to continue providing both critical and positive feedback up the VA chain of command to ensure the best service possible. Participating in candid discussions like these allows us to be our own advocates and for government leaders to learn first-hand those issues most important to our brothers and sisters.”

– Brian Neuman, a warrior served by WWP and an Alumni Deputy Director at WWP

VA Deputy Secretary Donald Remy speaks with warriors in San Antonio, Texas



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RESOURCES

SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

veterans.senate.gov

202-224-9126

Twitter: [@SVACDems](https://twitter.com/SVACDems) ★ [@SVACGOP](https://twitter.com/SVACGOP)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

veterans.house.gov

202-225-9756

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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

armed-services.senate.gov

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

va.gov

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Twitter: [@DeptVetAffairs](https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs)

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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Twitter: [@DeptofDefense](https://twitter.com/DeptofDefense)



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Fax: 904.405.1301 ★ woundedwarriorproject.org

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday - Friday 9 am - 9 pm EST



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