***Press Release…***

 ***from the Illinois House of Representatives***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Dec. 1, 2016 State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit

 217-782-8028

**Kifowit and Cullerton Propose Steps to Reduce Veteran Suicide**

**SPRINGFIELD, Ill. –** To work toward providing our returning servicemen and women with essential services, State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, D-Oswego, and State Sen. Tom Cullerton, D-Villa Park, released the Veterans’ Suicide Taskforce findings to the public.

This essential report, in which Kifowit and Cullerton are co-chairs, proposes action items to improve on ways to provide care for veterans and will serve as a future guide to the implementation of legislation to end the veteran suicide epidemic.

“As a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran, I know many struggling veterans,” Kifowit said. “This task force represents actually listening to the concerns of our veterans and a first step towards providing better care for veterans, their families and support networks. My hope is the task force’s findings enable us to make changes in law, build strong collaborations and start treating our veterans with the respect and level of service they deserve."

Kifowit and Cullerton collaborated to create the Veterans’ Suicide Taskforce, which gathered information from veterans, organizations and companies on how the state can more effectively meet the needs of the veteran community. This included focusing on all aspects of a veteran’s support network, employment, and support for the family of veterans, in addition to their time spent in combat. The taskforce findings recommended eleven action items to reduce veteran suicide, including properly funding higher education and training programs for veterans, enhancing services for the families of discharged and returning veterans and collaborating with the Illinois Chamber of Commerce to create an employer training program to focus on the needs of veteran employees.

“It’s our duty to take care of our veterans,” Cullerton said. “We need to do whatever we can to put a stop to veteran suicide in our communities and nation. This report will serve as a guide to outline our next step to ensure there are sufficient resources to give veterans what they need to address these issues.”

The Veterans’ Suicide Taskforce consisted of:

* State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit (D-Oswego)
* State Sen. Tom Cullerton  (D-Villa Park)
* State Rep. Jeanne Ives (R-Naperville)
* Retired United States Marine Paul Schimpf
* Secretary James Dimas, Illinois Department of Human Services
* Greg Dooley, Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs
* Lt. Col. Steve Foster, Illinois Army National Guard Deputy Command Chaplain
* Jennifer Martin, Illinois Department of Public Health, and
* Edward S. Landreth from the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago

For more information on the Taskforce, or for a digital copy of the report, please contact Kifowit’s office at 217-782-8028 or Cullerton’s office at 217-782-9463.