

Press Release...

...from the Illinois House of Representatives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit

630-585-1308

Kifowit and Cullerton Leading Efforts to Help Prevent Veterans' Suicide

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – With growing concern over the number of veterans who are committing suicide, State Rep. Stephanie Kifowit, D-Oswego, and State Senator Tom Cullerton, D-Villa Park, announced the meeting dates and locations of the Veterans' Suicide Task Force Hearings at a press conference on Tuesday.

“One veteran who believes that suicide is the only solution, is one too many,” Kifowit said. “No matter which branch a veteran has served in, we all live by the code to 'never leave someone behind'. We are committed to not leaving these veterans behind and working together to help save lives.”

Kifowit and Cullerton collaborated to create the Task Force on Veterans' Suicide. The Task Force will gather information from veterans, organizations and companies on how the state can more effectively meet the needs of the veteran community. This includes 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 hearings scheduled to take place across the State will focus on the mental health challenges facing veterans from all eras of service.

"If we can find meaningful solutions through our work on this Task Force, not only are we healing our state and veterans, but we are going to have an impact throughout the nation," Cullerton said. "We continue to hear alarming statistics on veteran suicide rates. Our mission is clear: we need to bring the statistic to zero veteran suicides a day."

Kifowit and Cullerton were joined at the press conference by the Chairperson of the Veterans' Affairs Committee State Representative Chapa LaVia (D-Aurora), USMC Veteran Captain Alexandra Stokman Brackett from Peoria, IL and Army Veteran Sergeant Will Attig from Carbondale, IL.

“My hope is that through this Task Force we can make genuine strides in assisting veterans and helping save lives,” Chapa LaVia said. “As the Chair of the Veterans' Committee, I look forward to working with Representative Kifowit and Senator Cullerton on finding ways we can meet our obligations to those who have sacrificed so much for our nation.”

The dates and locations of the Task Force on Veterans' Suicide are as follows:

- Monday, May 2 from 10 am to 2 pm at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, IL
- Monday, May 16 from 10 am to 2 pm at Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville, IL
- Tuesday, June 14 from 10 am to 2 pm at College of Lake County in Grayslake, IL
- Wednesday, June 15 from 10 am to 2 pm at Waubensee Community College in Sugar Grove, IL
- Thursday, June 16 from 10 am to 2 pm at Triton College in River Grove, IL

The Task Force on Veterans' Suicide will include:

- 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 who will provide additional guidance on the Task Force.

According to a recent U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs study, an estimated average of 22 veterans nationwide commit suicide every day. Veterans needing mental health support can call the hotline 24/7 at [800-273-8255](tel:800-273-8255), press 1. Chatting is available online at <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> or by texting 838255.

Kifowit's and Cullerton's House Joint Resolution 91 passed the 98th General Assembly. For more information on the Task Force, please contact Kifowit's office at [217-782-8028](tel:217-782-8028).

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