

Washington, DC -- U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) announced today that earlier this month, the Veterans Administration (VA) launched a national suicide prevention hotline to assist veterans suffering emotional crisis.

“I hope local veterans will take advantage of important services the VA has to offer to help them with PTSD or other emotional problems,” **said Arcuri**. “I recently visited the Rome VA clinic and saw firsthand some of the top-notch local services available to our veterans. These brave men and woman have served their country and we owe it to them to provide the services and benefits they need and deserve.”

The toll-free hotline number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). The VA’s hotline will be staffed by mental health professional in Canandaigua, NY. They will take toll-free calls from across the country and work closely with local VA mental health providers to assist callers. To operate the national hotline, the VA is partnering with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

In March, Arcuri voted for, and the House of Representatives passed, the Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act (H.R. 327), which directs the VA to develop and implement a comprehensive program to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans. That same month, Arcuri voted with a bipartisan majority to pass the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act (H.R. 1538), which would ensure that wounded service members receive the highest quality care as well as increase the efficiency and accountability of the VA health care system.

In June, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R 2642, the 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill, the largest single increase in the 77-year history of VA, providing critical resources for the 1,094,391 veterans in New York State. According to the Syracuse VA, there are currently 20,443 veterans in Oneida County.

“In Congress, we have taken concrete steps to provide the VA with the resources needed to best serve veterans,” **said Arcuri**. “Recently, I had the honor to vote for the first federal spending bill in over two decades that met the VA’s budget request.”

H.R. 2642 would provide \$900 million for mental health, PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and allow five VA polytrauma centers and three Centers of Excellence for Mental Health and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to become fully operational.

One-third of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan face mental health challenges, and up to 300,000 returning troops are expected to suffer from TBI.

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