

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-16) today praised President Obama and the Department of Veterans Affairs for announcing new regulations to make it easier for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to receive federal benefits. Rooney called on Congress to take the next step to assist afflicted veterans by passing bipartisan legislation to expand mental health screenings for returning war-fighters.

“For too long, our veterans suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder have been denied benefits or forced to document in painstaking detail the precise incident that led to their symptoms. These new regulations will cut through the red tape and ensure that veterans who bear invisible scars can get the treatment they need,” Rooney said.

The VA announced today that, rather than having to prove a precise incident that caused their illness, veterans will instead just have to show that they served in a war zone where conditions were consistent with the stress they claim. Rooney said is a good step toward improving treatment for veterans with mental health issues.

The next step, Rooney said, is for Congress to pass the bipartisan “Veterans’ Mental Health Assessments and Screenings Act” (H.R. 1308), which he introduced with Rep. Michael McMahon (D-NY) last year. H.R. 1308 would require returning service members to participate in confidential, one-to-one screenings with licensed mental health professionals.

“Making it easier for veterans with PTSD to get benefits is a good start, but we have to a better job of identifying and assisting troops and veterans who are at-risk for mental health disease,” Rooney said. “Mandatory, confidential screenings will help ensure that the men and women who put their lives on the line in service to our country can get the help they need and deserve.

“One in five veterans suffers from PTSD. We owe it to our troops and veterans to take action quickly to solve this growing problem.”

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