

Washington, D.C. – After the U.S. Army today released data showing a significant increase in suicides among Army Reservists and National Guardsmen, U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-16) continued his push to improve mental health services for American troop and veterans.

“While the Pentagon has made significant strides in the last few years to address mental health issues, we must do much more to ensure that our troops and veterans are able to get the mental health care they need, when they need it,” Rooney said.

“Eliminating the stigma surrounding mental health issues, identifying invisible wounds before they fester, and providing access to mental health professionals are critical steps toward reducing military suicides and ending this national tragedy.”

According to information released by the Army today, suicides among active-duty troops dropped slightly from 162 in 2009 to 156 in 2010, while the number of suicides among Reservists and Guardsmen spiked from 80 in 2009 to 145 in 2010.

Two weeks ago, Congressman Rooney introduced the Counselor Accessibility Reform and Expansion for Soldiers (CARES) Act, which would combat climbing rates of mental illness and suicide among troops and veterans by giving TRICARE beneficiaries direct access to professional mental health counselors. Rooney also plans to reintroduce legislation to mandate mental health screenings for returning troops.

Rooney sits on the House Armed Services Committee.

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