

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-16), a Member of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and Co-chairman of the House Military Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Caucus, issued the following statement after HASC approved the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA):

“The House Armed Services Committee has stepped up our efforts to help our men and women in uniform who are suffering from invisible wounds like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, depression and addiction.

“While we’ve made tremendous strides in recent years to improve mental health services for our troops and veterans, we still have significant work ahead of us to tackle the high rates of mental illness and suicide in our military communities. The 2013 defense authorization bill will build on the progress we have made to ensure that the men and women who serve our country receive the care they need and deserve.”

The 2013 NDAA specifically address the issue of substance abuse, encouraging the Department of Defense (DOD) to ensure that programs to ensure that programs are in place to train mental health counselors and treat service members. The bill also encourages the Department to expand research into new treatments.

Since his arrival in Congress in 2009, Congressman Rooney has led efforts to expand mental health services for troops and veterans. He worked with HASC and DOD to require confidential, face-to-face mental health evaluations for returning combat troops, and to cut through red tape to make it easier for TRICARE beneficiaries to see licensed mental health counselors.

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