

HOUSE BILL 1148

By Ragan

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 15, Chapter 2, relative to designating a day of observance for post-traumatic stress injury.

WHEREAS, all citizens of the United States possess the basic human right to the preservation of personal dignity; and

WHEREAS, all citizens of the United States deserve the investment of every possible resource to ensure their lasting physical, mental, and emotional well-being; and

WHEREAS, the diagnosis known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was initially formulated in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association to more accurately assess and assist veterans who had endured severe combat stress in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, combat stress is an invisible wound, which has historically been unjustly portrayed as a mental illness caused by a preexisting flaw of character or ability, and that the word "disorder" carries a stigma which perpetuates this misconception; and

WHEREAS, it has been shown through electromagnetic imaging that these invisible wounds can cause physical changes to the brain that more accurately describe an injury than a disorder; and

WHEREAS, referring to invisible wounds as a disorder can discourage the injured from seeking proper and timely medical treatment; and

WHEREAS, referring to invisible wounds as post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI) is less stigmatizing and viewed as more honorable, and this designation can favorably influence those affected and encourage them to seek treatment without fear of retribution or shame; and

WHEREAS, post-traumatic stress injury can occur following exposure to extremely traumatic events other than combat such as, but not exclusive to: interpersonal violence, life-threatening accidents, and natural disasters; and

WHEREAS, post-traumatic stress injury satisfying criteria A through H of the diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual deserves disability compensation equal to that allowed for PTSD under the law; and

WHEREAS, all citizens suffering post-traumatic stress injuries deserve our compassion and consideration, those brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces who have received these wounds in operational action against an enemy of the United States further deserve our clear and obvious recognition; and

WHEREAS, timely and appropriate treatment of post-traumatic stress injury can diminish complications and avert suicides; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 15, Chapter 2, is amended by adding the following as a new section:

June 27 of each year is to be observed as "Post-Traumatic Stress Injury Awareness Day", to be proclaimed as such by the governor, to promote awareness of persons suffering from post-traumatic stress injury.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.