



LEGISLATIVE "FREEDOM ADVOCATES" – JANUARY 2021 BULLETIN

Our Western Division Legislative Chairman, Cindy Queen shared information on the Deborah Sampson Act H.R. 3224, which has passed the house. Known by the same name S.514 passed through the Veterans Affairs Committee with an amendment and placed on the Senate calendar. The Deborah Sampson Act aims to make invisible women veterans visible and create equitable access to healthcare, housing, legal services and other resources and benefits. Deborah Sampson was a Massachusetts woman who disguised herself as a man in order to serve in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. She served 17 months in the army under the name "Robert Shirtleiff" of Uxbridge, MA, was wounded in 1782, and was honorably discharged at West Point, New York in 1783. Currently, there are roughly 2 million living women veterans who would benefit from the passing of this legislation. Please contact your senator and ask for their support to pass this bill. Many women do not join the VA system they don't know services are available or other reasons. Ask women veterans if they are enrolled and let them know of this legislation.

If you have not contacted your representatives in Congress, please do so, there is still time to pass the Buddy Check Bill, S.4657 and H.R. 2898. It is very easy to do on the National Legion Website which can be accessed through our Department website bottom of page click on the National American Legion emblem. Once the site comes up click on Programs, Then click on Legislative (under Meetings and National Affairs). Scroll down click on Action Center (3 rows down middle). Let your Senators and Representatives know why it is important to you to support Buddy Check Week. It as easy as fill in the blanks. You can also type in your email address to sign up for alerts. The alerts will let you know important legislative information. The bill also compels the VA to expand resources for the Veterans Crisis Line to handle any potential increased volume during the designated week. National Commander James Oxford states our veterans are in crisis, to help stem the tide of suicides among our veterans give us the tools to reach out to our fellow veterans in their hometowns. Military suicides have risen by 20% since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. As of today this is the only action alert on the National system. Please complete this very important alert.

The decade long initiative to link health records of active-duty military with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs records began implementation on March 2020. By late March 2020 23, million veteran's health records have migrated to the new system The Electronic Health Record Modernization initiative (EHRM). The system will now link the VA and DOD systems and will provide clinicians with efficient access to veteran's health information. October 24, 2020, the VA began using its new EHRM system at several VA facilities in the Northwest and Las Vegas. The program will gradually be expanded to all VA facilities nationwide and fully operational by 2028. We, as Auxiliary members can show our support by writing to Sen. Jon Tester, currently the ranking member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, thanking him and his committee for their thorough follow-through and expansion across the nation. This is easy to do, go to [tester.senate.gov](https://www.testersenate.gov), click on contact and fill in the blanks. I sent my sincere appreciation for the support of the Veterans Affairs Committee and Senator Tester as their ranking member today, will you?



*Joan Cannon
Dept. Legislative Chairm*