

WASHINGTON MUST PROTECT VETERANS FROM OPIOID ADDICTION

Congress must take action to provide safe and effective non-opioid pain management options to veterans and their families to prevent addiction before it starts.

By the Numbers: The Impact of the Opioid Epidemic on Veterans



Two-thirds of veterans report experiencing pain.¹

53% ↑ in Drug Overdose Mortality Rates.

U.S. military veterans have been heavily impacted by the opioid overdose crisis, with drug overdose mortality rates increasing by 53% from 2010–2019.²

\$1 Billion

The healthcare costs associated with prescription painkiller abuse from combat exposure during the War on Terror.³

Tens of Thousands of Veterans Impacted by Overdose Annually

In 10 years, there were over 42,000 overdose deaths among veterans.⁴

Increased Likelihood of Veterans on Pathway to Addiction

Receipt of a short-term opioid prescription among veterans is associated with increased risk of heroin initiation.⁵



Nearly half of combat wounded veterans report misuse of prescription opioids.⁶

Action is Needed: Prevent Addiction Before it Starts

In 2022, Congress passed the Non-Opioids Prevent Addiction in the Nation Act (“NOPAIN Act”) to ensure safe, non-addictive therapies are widely available to the tens of millions of Medicare recipients who undergo an outpatient surgical procedure every year.

Congress should build on these foundational efforts by expanding access to safe, FDA-approved non-opioid pain management options for veterans and their families under VA health care.

Congress: Expand Access to Non-Opioids for Veterans and Their Families.

¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). *Substance Use and Military Life Drug Facts*. October 2019.

² Annals of Medicine. *U.S. Military veterans and the opioid overdose crisis: a review of risk factors and prevention efforts*. July 2022.

³ National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). *Did the War on Terror Ignite an Opioid Epidemic?* September 2019.

⁴ Drug and Alcohol Dependence. *Veteran drug overdose mortality, 2010–2019*. April 2022.

⁵ Addiction. *Non-medical use of prescription opioids is associated with heroin initiation among US veterans: a prospective cohort study*. August 2016.

⁶ Science Direct. *Opioid and sedative misuse among veterans wounded in combat*. January 2019