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## **House of Representatives Passes House Memorial Urging Congress to Fully Fund Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Today the Florida House of Representatives passed [House Memorial 71](#), sponsored by **House Representative Matt Willhite (D-Wellington)**, urging the United States Congress to recognize the epidemic of suicide among veterans and to fully fund suicide prevention efforts by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

According to the 2020 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, there was a total of 6,435 veteran suicide deaths in 2018 – that shows the rate of suicide among veterans at 17.6 a day in 2018. However, the latest data lags two years behind current conditions and does not include any figures from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, which mental health experts warn may lead to even larger increases in the rates of mental distress among veterans.

Already, veterans report difficulty when transitioning to civilian employment. Often times, the highly developed skills that veterans obtain while they are in the military do not translate to higher-level civilian jobs, and can result in economic disparities, unemployment, and even homelessness.

Before the Florida House of Representatives voted **HM 71**, **Representative Willhite** told a personal story about how suicide among the veteran community has directly affected him.

“About five years ago, a member of my community committed suicide while wearing his military uniform,” said **Representative Willhite**. “He was not just a statistic, he was someone that, in my capacity as a firefighter, I had to respond to a 911 call and treat. I know personally that this is a real and serious issue.”

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