

United States Senate

March 3, 2022

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

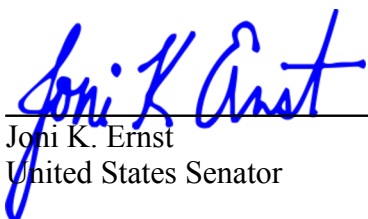
We write following Russia's invasion of Ukraine to encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to quickly develop a comprehensive outreach plan to connect veterans, including those experiencing post-traumatic stress, to mental health resources. As you know, images of the invasion of Ukraine have been widespread in the news and on social media. As veterans who have been exposed to life-threatening and dangerous experiences view these images, it is critical that the VA ensure they receive the appropriate support.

Images depicted in the media have the potential to impact all veterans, but they may be particularly troubling for the estimated 11 - 20% of veterans who experience post-traumatic stress after serving in the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom.¹ It is imperative that the VA make every effort to reach these veterans and make certain they are aware of mental health services and supports as the war in Ukraine continues.

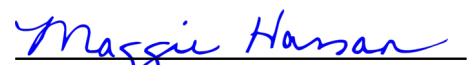
We appreciated the VA's efforts to distribute information about mental health resources following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. As veterans once again observe images of violence, we urge the VA to conduct a more comprehensive outreach campaign to ensure veterans receive detailed information about supports available, including for PTSD, and are connected to community-based support systems.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We are committed to working with you and your Department to ensure veterans receive appropriate resources and we look forward to reviewing your prompt response.

Sincerely,

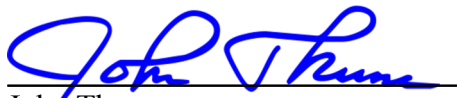


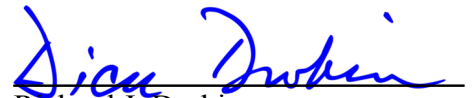
Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

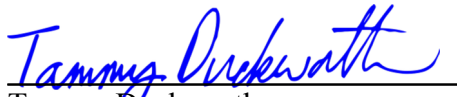


Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator


¹ https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp.

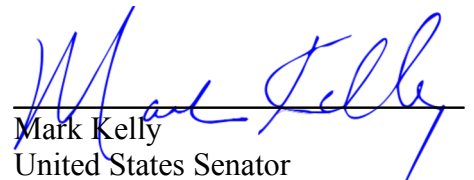

John Thune
United States Senator

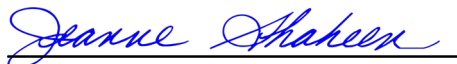

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator


Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator


Bill Hagerty
United State Senator


Martin Heinrich
United States Senator


Mark Kelly
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator