The American Legion

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N.W. ★ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 ★
(202) 861-2700 ★

September 21, 2020

The Honorable Joni Ernst
739 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510-1502

Dear Senator Ernst:

On behalf of the nearly 2 million members of The American Legion, I am pleased to express support for the draft legislation entitled "*To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to designate one week each year as ``Buddy Check Week'' for the purpose of outreach and education concerning peer wellness checks for veterans, and for other purposes,"* as currently written.

Our most sacred responsibility as a nation is to care for our fellow men and women who have served this nation with honor. Only with servant leadership and direct contact with our fellow veterans can we uncover the true needs of our warriors and avert potential crisis. The American Legion has long had a "Buddy Check Week," asking our Legionnaires to conduct veteran outreach as part of their daily routine. The American Legion's "Buddy Check" program has been a great tool for our membership, and we strongly support legislation that expands this program to VA.

This legislation requires VA to establish a "Buddy Check Week," provide educational opportunities, materials, and references for veterans to learn how to conduct personal wellness checks, as well as require increased resources for the Veterans Crisis Line to handle any potential increased usage during the designated week.

Through American Legion Resolution No. 18: *Buddy Check Week* and American Legion Resolution No. 27: *Veterans Crisis Line*, we strongly support this draft legislation, as currently written, as it directs VA to establish a "Buddy Check Week" and it expands resources for the Veterans Crisis Line. The American Legion sincerely appreciates your leadership on this legislation.

For God and Country,

James W. "Bill" Oxford

James W. Oxford
National Commander