

June 13, 2016

Dear Senator/Representative:

On behalf of the service members, veterans, and families we collectively represent, we urge you to preserve funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to offer assisted reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), in the final Fiscal Year 2017 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

As you know, as a result of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, many veterans have returned home from combat having lost the chance to start a family. Blasts from the widespread use of improvised explosive devices have increasingly resulted not only in traumatic amputations of at least one leg, but also pelvic, abdominal, urogenital, and spinal cord injuries—injuries which, in many cases, result in the inability to have children. Genitourinary (GU) injuries can impact physical, reproductive and mental health of service members and veterans that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Between 2005 and 2010, the Joint Theatre Trauma Registry recorded 1,525 genitourinary injuries; in 2010, a historic high of 12.7% of all battlefield injuries were recorded as relating to the GU system. This is tragic for many reasons, but especially for so many wounded warriors and family members because these injuries often drive their reintegration into civilian life.

Rooted now in more than thirty years of established medicine, IVF can be an effective solution for many injured veterans. The Department of Defense offers IVF for certain active duty service members. Once these personnel retire, however, they are subject to an obscure and outdated provision in the law, which the VA believes prevents it from covering IVF.

This situation is simply unacceptable. When a man or woman volunteers to serve and suffers injury as a result, it is incumbent on our country to make them whole to the extent science will allow. These men and women want only the very basic right to start a family and move forward with their lives. War took that away from them, and we should not place them in the position of paying tens of thousands of dollars if they want to get it back.

The amendment providing funding for the VA to offer assisted reproductive technologies passed the Senate Appropriations Committee with strong bipartisan support. By preserving this funding, you can demonstrate your commitment, making a real and fundamental difference in the lives of veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

AMVETS

Blue Star Families

Disabled American Veterans

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

National Military Family Association

Quality of Life Foundation

Vietnam Veterans of America

Bob Woodruff Foundation

Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Military Officers Association of America

Paralyzed Veterans of America

The Veterans Health Council

Wounded Warrior Project

Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)