



Veterans for Common Sense (VCS)

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VeteransforCommonSense.org

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The Honorable Chris Pappas
319 Cannon House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

SUBJECT: Support for H.R. 4845 to establish a VA Advisory Committee on LGBTQ Veterans

Dear Representative Pappas,

Thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 4845, legislation to establish an Advisory Committee on LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Veterans) Veterans within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

For too long, LGBTQ+ servicemembers experienced discrimination, hostility, and even brutality during their military service. Many LGBTQ+ servicemembers underwent nonjudicial punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) or were criminally prosecuted and then discharged administratively or with "bad paper" discharges – all for being who and how they were created. As a result, many LGBTQ+ veterans remain alienated from VA and the veteran community because of their shame-driven military discharges, notwithstanding their otherwise-honorable, combat, decorated, or even valorous military service and achievements. Thus, there are many unresolved issues adversely impacting LGBTQ+ veterans.

As a priority among these issues, there remains a great need in this cohort of veterans for systematic and comprehensive outreach and assistance to ensure that each of these veterans' military discharges is properly, expeditiously, and restoratively upgraded and their eligibility for VA services and programs restored. Additionally, there are issues with how VA could more adequately and equitably assist these veterans, including within VA healthcare settings. There also remain significant inequities in VA's administration of programs and services for the spouses and legal dependents of LGBTQ veterans, in State-run programs funded by federal VA grants, in VA's caregiver programs, and in other areas of VA program and services administration as they impact LGBTQ+ veterans.

This legislation would rightfully elevate discussion, and, it is hoped, resolution of these and other issues adversely impacting our nation's countless LGBTQ+ veterans. On behalf of Veterans for Common Sense, thank you for your leadership introducing this critically important legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Hardie".

Anthony Hardie
National Chair & Director
Veterans for Common Sense