

# ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

No. 247

---

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY

### 219th LEGISLATURE

---

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 2, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman KEVIN J. ROONEY**

**District 40 (Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic)**

**Assemblyman THOMAS P. GIBLIN**

**District 34 (Essex and Passaic)**

**Assemblyman RYAN E. PETERS**

**District 8 (Atlantic, Burlington and Camden)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Assemblymen Bergen, Dancer and Mukherji**

**SYNOPSIS**

Designates September 22nd of each year as “Veterans Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Day.”

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/2/2021)**

1   **A JOINT RESOLUTION** designating September 22 of each year as  
2       “Veterans Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Day.”  
3

4   **WHEREAS**, Individuals who have served in the United States military  
5       made significant sacrifices to ensure that this nation and the  
6       American people are safe and secure; and

7   **WHEREAS**, Members of the military are often deployed to remote  
8       locations, far from family and friends for extended periods of time  
9       and may not have regular contact with their loved ones; and

10   **WHEREAS**, These individuals may miss important milestones, such as  
11       the birth of a child, family birthdays, and the funeral of a loved one  
12       during their deployment; and

13   **WHEREAS**, Members of the military who are engaged in combat  
14       operations face additional stresses including situations where they  
15       may witness the death of fellow service members and living in  
16       constant fear of their own injury or death; and

17   **WHEREAS**, These stress factors contribute to a sharp increase in the  
18       diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder among active service  
19       members and veterans; and

20   **WHEREAS**, Since 2010 more than 65,000 veterans and active military  
21       have died by suicide, more than the total number of American  
22       combat deaths from the Vietnam War and the post-9/11 conflicts  
23       combined; and

24   **WHEREAS**, The New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans  
25       Affairs, the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, and various  
26       nonprofit entities provide resources to veterans and active military  
27       who are at risk of suicide including telephone hotlines and mental  
28       health workshops; and

29   **WHEREAS**, Increasing public awareness about the increased risk of  
30       suicide among veterans and active military can help inform veterans  
31       and military, their family, and the public about the resources  
32       available to these veterans and military and help eliminate the  
33       stigma associated with mental health treatments; and

34   **WHEREAS**, Designating September 22nd of each year as “Veterans  
35       Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Day” will raise our continued  
36       awareness to this critical threat to the health and safety of  
37       individuals who have sacrificed so much for their fellow Americans  
38       in service of our beloved country; now, therefore,  
39

40       **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*  
41       *State of New Jersey:*  
42

43       1. September 22nd of each year is designated as “Veterans  
44       Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Day” in the State of New  
45       Jersey and is a day to recognize, remember, and honor the Veterans  
46       and Active Military who died by suicide as well as to honor,  
47       respect, and unite their families. It is a day to forever remember  
48       their lives and service to our state and nation.

2. The Legislature requests the Governor to annually issue a proclamation calling upon public officials and the citizens of this State to observe “Veterans Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Day” with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

## STATEMENT

This joint resolution designates September 22nd of each year as “Veterans Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Day” in New Jersey. By having an annual observance, we elevate the public health challenge of the increased suicide rates of veterans and active duty military personnel into the public consciousness and raise our continued awareness to this challenge. This continued awareness facilitates discussion about Veteran/Military suicide, thereby taking away the societal stigma associated with mental health treatment. By normalizing the subject of mental health among Veterans and Active Military, we will allow them to receive necessary treatment without fear of judgment while simultaneously showing that we care as a State and nation, about preventing living Veterans and Active Military from dying by suicide. The joint resolution calls on the Governor to annually issue a proclamation calling on the people of this State to mark this day with appropriate activities and programs.

Individuals who have served in the United States military made significant sacrifices to defend the United States and its people. Members of the military are often deployed to remote locations far from family and friends and may not have regular contact with their loved ones. During their deployments these individuals can miss important milestones including the birth of a child, family birthdays, or the funeral of a loved one. Members of the military engaged in combat operations face added stresses including situations where they may witness the death of their fellow service members and living in constant fear of their own injury or death. These stress factors contribute to a sharp increase in the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress among service members and United States military and veterans. Since 2010 more than 65,000 veterans and active military have died by suicide, more than the total number of American combat deaths from the Vietnam War and the post-9/11 conflicts combined. The New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, the federal Department of Veterans Affairs, and various nonprofit entities provide resources to veterans and active military who are at risk of suicide including telephone hotlines and mental health workshops. Increasing public awareness about the increased risk of suicide amongst veterans and military can help inform veterans, their families, and the public about the resources

1 available to these veterans and military and help eliminate the  
2 stigma associated with mental health treatments. Designating  
3 September 22nd of each year as “Veterans Suicide Awareness &  
4 Remembrance Day” will raise our continued awareness to this  
5 critical threat to the health and safety of individuals who have  
6 sacrificed so much for their fellow Americans in service of our  
7 beloved country. This annual observance originated with Kevin W.  
8 Hertell, a U.S. Air Force Veteran who lost his cousin to suicide in  
9 2016, Senior Airman Robert McRae Dean, U.S. Air Force. Mr.  
10 Hertell established this observance to recognize and forever  
11 remember the life and death of Senior Airman Robert McRae Dean  
12 and all other Veterans and Active Military members who have died  
13 by suicide.