

May 2, 2016

Re: Support IVF Funding for Veteran Families

Dear Senator:

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 in 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 because, for so many wounded warriors, families are what drives reintegration into civilian life.

Rooted now in more than thirty years of established medicine, in vitro fertilization (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 Once these personnel retire, however, they are subject to an obscure and outdated provision in the law, which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) believes prevents it from covering IVF.

This is a situation which, in our view, is simply unacceptable. When a man or woman volunteers to serve and suffers injury as a result, it is incumbent on us 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.

In the coming days, as the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2017 comes to the floor, you will have the opportunity to address this critical need. An amendment providing funding for the VA to offer assisted reproductive technologies, of which IVF is the most common and successful, was passed by the full Appropriations Committee with strong bipartisan support. On behalf of the service members, veterans, and families we collectively represent, we urge you to support this provision as the bill comes to the floor.

Much is said about honoring the sacrifice that veterans make for our families. With your vote, you can demonstrate that commitment, making a real and fundamental difference in the lives of veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

Blue Star Families

Bob Woodruff Foundation

Disabled American Veterans

Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Military Officers Association of America

National Military Family Association

Paralyzed Veterans of America

Quality of Life Foundation

The Veterans Health Council

Vietnam Veterans of America

Wounded Warrior Project