

May 11, 2016

The Honorable Dan Patrick  
The Capitol, Second Floor East  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, TX 78711-2068

Dear Lieutenant Governor Patrick,

The purpose of this letter is to request that you authorize the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs & Military Installations to conduct a fact finding hearing reference medical cannabis for our Texas veterans. Many Texas veterans currently use cannabis for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), chronic pain and other service connected disabilities. Many other Texas veterans have become refugees to neighboring states with medical cannabis programs such as Colorado and New Mexico. We would like for our Senators to hear our veterans who choose to use cannabis as an alternative medication to addictive pharmaceutical medications, many with negative side effects. Twenty-five states currently have medical cannabis programs. We would like for our Senators to consider the need for a comprehensive and functional medical cannabis program in our state. The Texas Compassionate Use Program passed by the legislature in 2015 is focused on a group of patients with only one condition—epilepsy. It does not help veterans.

I served twenty-one years in the U.S. Army. I am a veteran of Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. I served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division in Baghdad in 2004-2005. When I retired, I was rated 60% disabled by my Veterans Administration doctors. I was prescribed opioid medications for chronic pain and psychotropic drugs for PTSD. The opioid medication was addictive and the psychotropic drugs had terrible side effects. I researched medical cannabis and discovered that thousands of veterans testify that cannabis is effective for chronic pain and PTSD. I started using medical grade cannabis and found out for myself that it is effective to relieve my chronic pain and the symptoms of PTSD. I no longer use opioids or psychotropic drugs. Unfortunately, I am labeled a criminal in our state because I choose to use cannabis. I am not a criminal. I am a retired military officer, a homeowner, a taxpayer and a voter. I want our state to implement a strictly regulated medical cannabis program. I request that you charge the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs to research and make public the facts about medical cannabis and how it affects the symptoms of PTSD and chronic pain. Veterans would appreciate the opportunity to provide public testimony and add to the record studies and peer reviewed research. We believe that our legislators need the opportunity to learn what veterans already know about medical cannabis.

Respectfully,

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