



July 15, 2021

Hon. Tammy Baldwin
Member
United States Senate

Hon. Dan Sullivan
Member
United States Senate

Hon. Mark Levin
Member
United States House of Representatives

Hon. Matt Rosendale
Member
United States House of Representatives

Hon. Tim Ryan
Member
United States House of Representatives

Hon. Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member
United States House of Representatives

Dear Senators Baldwin and Sullivan and Representatives Levin, Rosendale, Ryan and McMorris Rodgers,

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo), the only organization representing the nation's 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs, I write to thank you for introducing the bipartisan *Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act of 2021* to provide critical new resources to county veterans service officers (CVSOs.) Counties support this legislation, which would meaningfully increase our ability to support veterans as they navigate the cumbersome bureaucracy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits process.

At the local level, CVSOs help veterans access a range of service-connected federal benefits, including VA health care, housing and transition assistance programs. CVSOs are often the first point of contact in the community for veteran's services. Across the country, CVSOs in 36 states and two Native American tribes process more than \$22 billion annually in claims for direct compensation and pension benefits for veterans. Though CVSOs' primary focus is helping veterans navigate the federal benefits system, these officers are currently funded almost entirely by counties, which creates challenges for areas with high demand or counties that serve veterans in rural areas.

The CVSO act will provide critical federal resources to help us meet our growing caseloads by awarding competitive grants worth \$250 million over five years for states to create, expand, or support CVSOs or similar local entities. This is especially important as the twenty-year anniversary of September 11th, 2001 approaches and corresponding active duty service members become eligible for retirement, potentially increasing our caseloads by large volumes. Should it pass, pending legislation to address toxic exposure among veterans in a comprehensive manner will make additional resources for CVSOs even more important to help impacted veterans access the health care and disability benefits for which they are newly eligible.

Thank you for your ongoing, bipartisan commitment to our nation's veterans and for acknowledging the important role that CVSOs play in providing them with the federal benefits they earned through their service. Counties look forward to working with you to ensure this legislation passes during the 117th Congressional session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Chase". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the beginning of the word "Matthew".

Matthew Chase,
Executive Director