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PRESS RELEASE

Commissioner George P. Bush teams up with Okay to Say™ to help fellow veterans coping with PTS

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AUSTIN — AUSTIN – Today Okay to Say™ released a new public service announcement (PSA) featuring Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush, Chairman of the Veterans Land Board (VLB), encouraging his fellow veterans and their loved ones to seek help when dealing with post-traumatic stress (PTS). The #okatyto say grassroots effort is targeted at eliminating the social stigma that prevents many from seeking the help they need. Supporters of Okay to Say™ are encouraging people in communities across the state to join the movement to make it okay to talk openly about mental illness—just like any physical disease. Commissioner Bush’s PSA is available on the Okay to Say™ YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYxRw2RI01G6SV5nPapbtaQ>.

“Post-traumatic stress is a very real and serious issue that many of my fellow veterans face every day,” said Commissioner Bush. “Like other wounds of war, PTS is an injury – one that can be treated, allowing those who suffer to return to their lives. But, the first step in dealing with PTS is to ask for help – knowing that it’s okay to say, ‘I have PTS.’ Family, friends, health care professionals, and your fellow veterans all can and will help you, because you are not alone.”

Okay to Say™ is a community-based movement initiated by the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute to increase public awareness about how mental health issues affect Texans, as well as to help people voice the challenges and successes they, their loved ones or friends encounter when they seek help for this treatable disease. Okay to Say asks individuals and organizations to join the movement and show your support for talking about mental health by signing your name at okaytosay.org. Texans can also show their support by joining the movement on the Okay to Say Facebook page. By talking openly about mental health, Okay to Say hopes to raise awareness that treatment works and is available across Texas.

“I am asking all veterans in Texas and nationwide, if you see this message, show your support for our veterans with PTS and all those who suffer with mental health issues - let them know it is okay to talk about mental illness, just like it’s okay to talk about physical illness” said Commissioner Bush. “Please go to okaytosay.org and sign your name. You will be joining thousands of others who have already shared their names

and stories. You will be showing your support for our veterans and those who are struggling to talk about mental illness. And if you know a veteran with post-traumatic stress, tell them it's okay to say, 'I have PTS.'”

“By adding your voice and inspiring others to join too, together, we can eliminate the stereotypes that stand in the way of people getting care for this treatable disease and help make Texas a healthier place to live for all of us,” said Andy Keller, PhD, chief executive officer, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. “We are excited that Commissioner Bush is joining the Okay to Say™ team to show support for veterans suffering from PTS and all who suffer from mental illness.”

Commissioner Bush served in the U.S. Navy, including a tour in Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom. Having seen the devastating effect of post-traumatic stress on our veterans, Commissioner Bush initiated a first of its kind program in all eight of the Texas State Veterans Homes to better identify and treat PTS, ensuring that Texas will be serving the next generation of men and women who have fought for this country. Commissioner Bush believes it is these efforts that will help Texas continue to be the best state in the nation for not just current veterans, but also for the next generation of soldier, sailor, airman or Marine.

Facts About Mental Illness

- 9 out of 10 Texans think it is harder to talk about mental health rather than physical issue.
- 88% of Texans agree that stigma surrounding mental health issues needs to be removed.
- 74% of Texans agree more education and information would make them feel more confident about mental illness.
- 3 in 4 Texans have a friend or family member that has experienced a mental health issue.
- 2/3 of people with a diagnosable mental illness do not seek treatment.
- 20% of all mental health patients nationally quit treatment prematurely.
- 75% of Texans agree more education would make them feel more confident about discussing mental illness.
- Nationally, people with mental illness often experience discrimination at work, in school, in housing or in healthcare.

For more information, visit <https://www.okaytosay.org/> and spread the word on Twitter about this important movement using #okaytosay.

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