

Address to the UVC on Women Veteran Legislation:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Veterans Coalition of Colorado or, as we know it, the UVC, and its member organizations, for the legislative work they do on behalf of the almost 44,000 women veterans who call Colorado home.

Although the UVC is known as a lobbying organization, it also focuses on awareness and education. The services that the UVC provide, directly help our women veterans transition from service to civilian life. Through our interaction with women veterans, we are able to identify other issues, such as homelessness, addiction, the effects of PTSD and MST, and a suicide rate that is 6% higher than our civilian counterparts.

Through The American Legion's System Worth Saving program, created in 2003 to assess the quality and timeliness of VA health care, we have been able to work with the VA to identify gender-specific needs for women veterans. And, although there have been advancements and improvements, there are still challenges with service, outreach, communication and coordination. Since the number of female veterans seen at the VA between 2000 and 2015 almost tripled, you can see how important it is to constantly monitor issues and provide feedback.

At a state level, The UVC advocated and supported legislation that produced a first-ever women veterans license plate. The UVC also supports a bill to establish a State Women Veterans Program within the Department of Veterans Affairs that would improve awareness of and equitable access to federal and state benefits, programs and services that the growing population of Colorado women veterans have earned through their service to the nation.

Federally, since the 2018 mid-term election, several women representatives were elected to Congress. Six women now serve on The House Committee of Veterans' Affairs. On March 12th, they unanimously voted to reauthorize the Women Veterans Task Force. This task Force works to increase the visibility of the 2 million women who have served in the US military and promote inclusivity and equitable access to comprehensive health care, benefits, education and economic opportunity and other federal resources.

It was my pleasure to work with the UVC during my term as Department Commander. I was their first Roving Ambassador, and now serve as the Communications Committee Chair. As a woman veteran, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you. Thank you for always making women veteran education and legislation a priority.