



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:
Melanie Fonder
(202) 715-1568
melanie.fonder@dittus.com

All Other Inquiries:
Brian Altman
(202) 449-3600
baltman@spanusa.org

Statement of Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA) Executive Director Jerry Reed on Senate Hearing on Mental Health Issues

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 25, 2007 — Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN USA) Executive Director Jerry Reed released the following statement regarding the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs hearing on mental health issues today:

“All too often, we hear devastating stories about veterans who have struggled with mental illness and in some cases, taken their own life,” Reed said. “Today we heard one such story from Randy Omvig whose son Joshua died by suicide following an eleven month tour of duty in Iraq.” “Preliminary data tells us that veterans are at a higher-than-average risk for suicide. The data suggests that 19 percent of all completed suicides are veterans, but they only make up 11 percent of the population. Nothing is more important than ensuring that our veterans receive the quality mental health care that they need and deserve. SPAN USA believes a close examination of veterans’ mental health resources – such as we saw today – is critical to preventing suicide.”

SPAN USA strongly supports the Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act (S. 479/H.R. 327), which directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement a comprehensive program to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans, would make available 24-hour mental health care for veterans found to be at risk and would develop an outreach and education program for veterans and their families to recognize readjustment problems and promote mental health.

NOTE: To schedule an interview with SPAN USA Executive Director Jerry Reed, please contact Melanie Fonder at (202) 715-1568 or melanie.fonder@dittus.com.

###

SPAN USA is the nation’s only suicide prevention organization dedicated to leveraging grassroots support among suicide survivors and others to advance public policies that prevent suicide. Since its founding nine years ago, SPAN USA has led the drive to make suicide a public health priority by building political will and calling for the development and implementation of a national strategy for suicide prevention. Using its extensive grassroots network of survivors and advocates, SPAN USA has actively promoted the cause on Capitol Hill and in state legislatures. For more information, please visit www.spanusa.org.

OPENING MINDS. CHANGING POLICY. SAVING LIVES.®