



**From the Desk of the NCOA Chairman of the Board  
September 2020**

My fellow Non Commissioned Officer Association (NCOA) members, September is National Suicide Prevention Month and with the veteran suicide rate at or near an all-time high, it has never been more important for each of you to reach out to your buddies and do buddy checks to make sure that your buddy will be there tomorrow.

I recently watched an NCOA Zoom call that resonated with me in a personal way. One of the participants was a Marine veteran, SSgt Tim Jenson, who I discovered served in Iraq at the same time I was there. He is a generation younger than I, but he triggered some factors that I think we often dismiss because they may be too obvious, or because we have become so focused on COVID-19 that we have just forgotten.

A common denominator with the vast majority of men and women who have and are serving in the armed forces is patriotism. World events like 9/11 brought out a huge surge in joining the military because the very fiber of our nation was violently attacked. The heroism and sacrifice of those first responders rushing into the twin towers and the Pentagon knowing that they were putting themselves in danger to save total strangers no matter what their political, racial, sexual, or religious affiliation made us all proud to be Americans. Those actions also resonate with those of us who serve in the military. For a period of time, our nation was in shock. Differences no longer mattered. Our entire nation mobilized to send help through agencies like the American Red Cross. Americans of all ages, races, sexes, and socio-economic and political backgrounds came together.

Today we find ourselves in another kind of crisis, one that is invisible, but just as deadly as that attack on the twin towers and the Pentagon. As a nation, we have eliminated slavery, elevated women to an equal status with the right to vote and have worked to address and eliminate many other social injustices. This work is not done as there is still a lot to do. One point that SSgt Jensen mentioned about his tour in Iraq that is one that demonstrates the concepts of freedom and patriotism best of all was watching the Iraqi people willing to risk their very lives to have an opportunity to vote. They stood in lines longer than anything you could imagine in this country to vote and have their finger imprinted with the purple ink showing that they had cast a ballot. What makes that impressive is that there were forces trying to stop the voting and they openly attacked and killed Iraqi citizens standing in line and yet the Iraqi's were not going to give up their opportunity to vote, no matter what.

NCOA members, no matter where you live, you have the opportunity to lead within your community and show that patriotism and civic responsibility are not dead in this country. While we are not a perfect nation, we are by far the best option on the entire planet and if we can come together like a nation after 9/11 and sit down and address our problems, we can work together and make America even better. Take the leadership that you were exposed to and used while in the military to make a difference in your community.

If you have any ideas or suggestions, either contact headquarters or contact me at [chairman@ncoausa.org](mailto:chairman@ncoausa.org) and I can assure you that your leadership will take note.

Strength in Unity & Leadership by Example,

MCPO (SCW) Terry M. Haines, USN (Ret)  
Chairman, International Board of Directors