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**SPAN USA Commends President for Signing Joshua Omgig Veterans
Suicide Prevention Act Into Law**

Washington, D.C. (Nov. 6, 2007)· The Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA) today thanked President George W. Bush for signing into law the Joshua Omgig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act (H.R. 327) and again praised bill sponsors Rep. Leonard Boswell (D-Iowa) and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) for their tremendous work in Congress to pass the bill.

As we approach Veterans Day, there is no better way we can honor our veterans than by ensuring they receive the mental health care that they deserve,+said Jerry Reed, executive director of SPAN USA. We know that male U.S. veterans are twice as likely to die by suicide as males without military service . making implementation of the Joshua Omgig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act as quickly as possible an imperative.+

The bill is named for Joshua Omgig, who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder following an 11-month tour of duty in Iraq, and completed suicide in 2005 at his home in Iowa.

Reed thanked Randy and Ellen Omgig, Joshua's parents, for sharing their experience.

Randy and Ellen Omgig exemplify SPAN USA's mission of transforming grief into action to prevent future tragedies and they have exhibited courage in speaking out on the important public health issue of veterans' suicide+Reed said.

The bill 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.

More than 31,000 people die by suicide each year in the United States and approximately 1.4 million attempt suicide. In contrast, fewer than 20,000 die by homicide or from HIV/AIDS. Two-thirds of those who die by suicide are not receiving treatment at the time of their death.

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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 in 1996, 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.

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