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**SPAN USA Commends U.S. Senate for Passage of
Joshua Omgig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act**

Washington, D.C. (Sept. 28, 2007)— The Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA) today praised the U.S. Senate for unanimously approving an amended version of the House-passed Joshua Omgig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act (H.R. 327). The House passed the bill in March.

SPAN USA thanked Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, for ensuring the passage of the measure. Through the efforts of Sen. Harkin and his Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, minor changes were agreed to that led Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) to release his hold blocking action on the bill.

“This is bipartisan legislation that will help ensure that our veterans receive the mental health care that they need. SPAN USA applauds the U.S. Senate for approving this important bill,” said Jerry Reed, executive director of SPAN USA. “Research shows us that male U.S. veterans are twice as likely to die by suicide than those without military service — making passage of the Joshua Omgig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act all the more critical.”

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.

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.