

SENATE, No. 4281

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 16, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator DECLAN J. O'SCANLON, JR.

District 13 (Monmouth)

SYNOPSIS

Designates “Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Flag” as official State flag.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 **AN ACT** designating the “Suicide Awareness & Remembrance
2 Flag” as an official State flag and supplementing chapter 3 of
3 Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

4
5 **WHEREAS**, For more than 200 years of our nation’s history, brave men
6 and women have fought for this country through their service in the
7 Armed Forces of the United States; and

8 **WHEREAS**, This State strives to support its many resident service
9 members and provide veterans with the assistance needed after their
10 discharge from the Armed Forces; and

11 **WHEREAS**, Many veterans and active military members suffer from
12 post-traumatic stress (PTS) and depression, and when left untreated,
13 can lead to suicide attempts; and

14 **WHEREAS**, Between 2001 and 2019, the rate of suicide among
15 veterans and active military members increased by 36 percent,
16 totaling more than 100,000 veterans and active military members
17 lost to suicide in the same time period; and

18 **WHEREAS**, The “Suicide Awareness & Remembrance Flag” or SAR
19 Flag (spoken as S-A-R) will honor and forever remember all
20 veterans and active military members lost to suicide and raise our
21 continued awareness of veteran suicide and suicide prevention
22 programs; and

23 **WHEREAS**, The SAR Flag was designed by United States Air Force
24 Veteran Kevin W. Hertell, after his cousin, Senior Airman Robert
25 Dean, USAF, was lost to suicide in 2016; and

26 **WHEREAS**, The SAR Flag contains several symbolic elements,
27 consisting of an individual’s silhouette facing left to pay homage to
28 the Prisoner of War flag (the primary inspiration in the creation of
29 the SAR Flag) enclosed in a black circle which represents the unity
30 of the military in mourning, the gold star that has been emblematic
31 of a lost military member for over 100 years, a laurel wreath with
32 20 exposed leaves to represent the 20 veterans and active military
33 members who die by suicide each day, the initials “SAR” at the top
34 of the star, and the phrase “Honor the fallen” beneath the star; and

35 **WHEREAS**, It is altogether fitting and proper that the State of New
36 Jersey adopt the SAR Flag as an official State flag to honor and
37 forever remember all members and veterans of the Armed Forces of
38 the United States who have been lost to suicide; now, therefore,

39
40 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
41 *of New Jersey:*

42
43 1. The “Suicide Awareness & Remembrance (S-A-R) Flag” is
44 designated an official State flag to honor and remember veterans
45 and members of the Armed Forces of the United States who have
46 been lost to suicide. The SAR Flag shall be a black flag that depicts
47 the silhouette of an individual within a gold star along with a laurel

1 wreath. The initials “SAR” shall be written at the top of the flag
2 and the phrase “Honor the fallen” shall be located beneath the star.

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4 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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9 This bill designates the “Suicide Awareness & Remembrance
10 Flag” or SAR Flag as an official State flag for recognizing all
11 veterans and members of the United States Armed Forces who have
12 been lost to suicide.

13 Veteran and active military member suicide has affected many
14 Americans. From 2001 to 2019, suicide rates among veterans and
15 active military members increased by 36 percent, resulting in the
16 deaths of over 100,000 veterans and active military members.

17 The SAR Flag was designed by United States Air Force Veteran
18 Kevin W. Hertell to raise our continued awareness of veteran and
19 active military member suicide and suicide prevention programs, to
20 honor and forever remember those lost to suicide, as well as to
21 honor, respect and unite their families. The flag contains several
22 symbolic elements to honor all veterans and active military
23 members lost to suicide.

24 The SAR Flag also stands as a tangible symbol of hope to living
25 veterans and active military to let them know that they are not
26 alone, and to remove the stigma of seeking mental health treatment
27 by changing the perception of mental health within their warrior
28 culture.