

**Testimony of Martha MacCallum
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**Before the United States House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space,
and Technology Subcommittee on Research and Technology
and Subcommittee on Energy**

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Chairwoman Comstock, Chairman Weber, Ranking Member Lipinski and Ranking Member Veasey, Members of the Committee, thank you for having me here today.

In my work, I am fortunate to speak with Generals, military leaders and Pentagon officials, as well as many of the other great men and women who serve or have served our country.

Like most of us, as a citizen, I am enormously grateful to them for their service and humbled by their sacrifice; knowing that as much as I love my country, I could never live up to the measure of their bravery and heroism. Like most of us, I want to show my gratitude to those who put their lives on the line. Those who make the sacrifices, who face the danger, who go to the front lines to protect us and the freedom we cherish as Americans.

Soldier Strong was born after 9/11, out of Chris Meek's desire to prove to our patriots that we are forever thankful. That what we can do as citizens and as a Country, is make sure that those who were willing to move forward in combat, will now be able to move forward in life. Whatever they lost on the battle field or in injuries after they've served, we can help them overcome to the greatest of our ability.

9/11 was a day that changed us forever. As a lifelong New York/ New Jersey resident, I watched the Towers come down, and with them - the lives of people I knew. The families of 13 fathers and mothers from my hometown. I vowed that day, to tell the story of the War on Terror and the battles that continue to the best of my ability, and to support those who heard the call of President Bush when he said, "[the] people who knocked these buildings down, will hear from all of us soon." The men and women of our armed forces made that message heard loud and clear. Some of them paid the ultimate price carrying that message to our enemies.

When Chris Meek came to see me about the organization he started with the simple mission of sending basic supplies to our troops to show them we cared about them, and how that mission evolved into opening up a world of possibility for our injured patriots when they came back home, I was in. I joined the Advisory Board and have been dedicated to using my voice and the platform I have through my work, to raise awareness and support and to spread the word about the cutting edge technologies emerging in this field and the life changing impact they could have for those to whom I owe so much. The response has been incredible. I believe our viewers and Americans across this country want better for our Veterans. Better than a system that leaves gaps and does not allow them the support they deserve.

I will never forget the day that Dan Rose came to our Studio to demonstrate how his Soldier Suit allowed him to get up from his wheelchair and take the steps he never dreamed he would be able to take again. The look on his face said it all. Will. Possibility. Promise. As Americans we must make sure that we give back to those who gave so much. But give back in a way that is uniquely American, that relies on ingenuity and cutting edge technology, and never taking no for an answer. As JFK once said about the US Space Mission, “we choose to go to the Moon not because it is easy, but because it is hard.”

We live in a time when Ironman is not just a movie. It is moment when technology made in America can rebuild arms and allow bodies with severed spinal cords to stand and walk. Companies like Ekso Bionics, Bionix, Mobius Bionix and Myomo are leading the way. But there is still a long way to go. We will do it - not because it is easy, but because it is hard, and because it is the right thing to do.

Embracing this technology is a winner for the U.S, for our military and for those who will benefit from the growth of the industry here as well. It makes sense on every level.

Thanks to the work of a very lean and dedicated team, SoldierStrong operates on a budget that puts just 9-12 percent toward operating costs. 80 percent goes directly to bringing this technology more than 25,000 veterans at rehab centers and VA facilities across the country so far. Soldier Strong has given more than 2.5 million dollars in high tech medical devices that directly help our injured armed forces, when they come home. And \$500,000 toward Scholarships for those whose way forward is through education that open doors for their next steps in life.

I encourage you to think about how the funding that supports our fighting forces in the field, can be extended to support the extraordinary research already being done with taxpayer funding and ensure that our injured veterans access to the scientific advances that come from it.

As Veteran Jason Geiger put it, “You can’t put a price on walking. You can’t put a price on someone’s ability to be six feet tall again and stand up and kiss your wife. Or stand up and hug your daughter, or your son. You can’t put a price on that.”

Thank you for listening and for inviting me here today, on behalf of Soldier Strong.