

purchase and distribute medical and surgical supplies.

VA attempted to create a centralized MSPV formulary to standardize the products its clinicians can buy as an idea to concentrate VA's buying power to extract savings from fewer suppliers.

But the formulary was developed with inadequate input from experienced clinicians, and as a result, it contains unwanted supplies while omitting necessary products.

Because of these problems, usage of MSPV has failed to meet its objectives, putting some of the prime vendors and suppliers under financial strain, and threatening the stability of the program.

H.R. 5418 preserves the MSPV's current structure, consisting of multiple regional prime vendors, and it prohibits a move to a single nationwide prime vendor.

The bill also requires that each VA employee making decisions related to the structure have medical expertise relevant to those items.

H.R. 5418 ensures medical professionals have the tools and resources they need to deliver world-class care to our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, this is a good piece of legislation, I support its passage, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, it is hard for me to believe we are going to pass a piece of legislation that has this much common sense in it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5418, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REED). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5418, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2018

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4958) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2018, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4958

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2018".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2018, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2018, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—Each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2018, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 2(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2019.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4958.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4958, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2018.

This bill was introduced by the subcommittee chairman, MIKE BOST of Il-

linois, and I appreciate his leadership on this issue.

VA provides compensation to help fulfill our obligation to take care of the brave men and women who have been injured during their service to our Nation.

This money can be a lifeline for veterans who have service-connected disabilities that may affect their earning ability.

These veterans often have families to support, and they should not be worried about how they are going to pay their bills when prices go up.

This bill will help ensure that the value of veterans' benefits are not eroded by inflation by giving veterans a cost-of-living increase if Social Security recipients receive one this year.

The amount of the increase will be determined by the consumer price index, which establishes the COLA for Social Security beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support this measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4958, the Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act.

As the chairman said, it is our responsibility to make sure the guarantee of these benefits is not eroded by inflation. It provides for a simple cost-of-living adjustment at the same rate as set for Social Security benefits. It may seem like a small amount in any one year, but without the adjustment for inflation, the impact on veterans' finances is significant when compounded over time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the subcommittee chairman, MIKE BOST, for his work, and ELIZABETH ESTY, both for cosponsoring the bill and bringing it to us today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ROE and his staff for their work clearing this bill. It is an important one. Our veterans have been waiting for word on this. I think I am happy to report it looks like we have taken that step moving it forward. It will make a lot of folks happy.

I hear about this one a lot, so you know it is on their minds. It just makes sense, and doing it before Memorial Day sends a really strong message.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 4958, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST), our Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee chairman.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, this is a must-pass bill.

Many disabled veterans and their families depend on their veterans' benefits to pay for things like food and medicine.

For many of these veterans, these payments are a lifeline. In some cases, these benefits may even be the only income these veterans have. It is only

fair that we ensure that the benefits paid to veterans who were injured during their military service do not lose value because of inflation.

If we don't, it could become hard for people who were injured while serving this Nation in uniform to keep their heads above water.

H.R. 4958 would financially protect the veterans who protected us by providing a cost-of-living increase. The amount of the COLA will be the same increase that Social Security beneficiaries will receive.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs ranking member, Ms. ESTY, for being the lead cosponsor of this bill with me. This bill has also enjoyed bipartisan support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4958 and help disabled veterans and their families keep up with the rising costs of basic necessities.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, this is a good piece of legislation. I thank the gentleman for bringing it up. The taxpayers understand that this is exactly what we are supposed to be doing. I encourage a "yes" vote, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the subcommittee chairman and Marine veteran, MIKE BOST, for bringing this up. It is a great piece of legislation. I encourage all Members to support H.R. 4958, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4958, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2018.

H.R. 4958 directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase, as of December 1, 2018, the rates of veterans' disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children.

The bill increases the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans.

For the brave military men and women serving our country, this will help offset the cost of living in higher cost areas of the country.

Our nation owes a great debt to these fearless men and women defending our nation.

Providing cost of living adjustments to keep up with inflation is an effective way to honor their sacrifice.

Many of our veterans rely on the disability benefits they receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs to merely make ends meet.

While Social Security benefits are automatically adjusted annually to keep pace with inflation, Congress must pass legislation every year to increase the rates of veteran disability compensation.

Unfortunately, it requires an act of Congress to make this same adjustment for our nation's veterans.

Passing H.R. 4958 ensures that our nation's veterans are able to receive the same annual cost of living adjustment of Social Security recipients.

The community-integrated rehabilitation treatment provided by the pilot program will serve as a vital resource to our veterans as they overcome burdensome health problems.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 4958 to show their support and gratitude for the many sacrifices made by our service men and women.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4958.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS SMALL BUSINESS CONTINUATION ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5044) to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the treatment of certain surviving spouses under the contracting goals and preferences of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5044

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Service-Disabled Veterans Small Business Continuation Act".

SEC. 2. TECHNICAL AMENDMENT REGARDING TREATMENT OF CERTAIN SUR- VIVING SPOUSES UNDER CON- TRACTING GOALS AND PREF- ERENCES OF DEPARTMENT OF VET- ERANS AFFAIRS.

Effective on the date specified in subsection (e) of section 1832 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114-328; 130 Stat. 2660), section 8127(k)(3) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by such section 1832, is further amended by inserting after the period at the end the following new sentence: "A surviving spouse of such a veteran who is not covered by subparagraph (C)(i) of such section by reason of the disability rating of the veteran being less than 100 percent shall be treated as being so covered during the period beginning on the date of the death of the veteran and ending on the date that is three years after such death, the date on which the surviving spouse remarries, or the date on which the surviving spouse relinquishes an ownership interest in the small business concern, whichever occurs first."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5044.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5044, Service-Disabled Veterans Small Business Continuation Act.

Current law authorizes a special set-aside program at the Department of Veterans Affairs for veteran-owned small businesses and Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses called Vets First Program. This program has been highly successful in providing VOSBs and SDVOSBs more opportunities, so much so that VA spent almost 20 percent of all contracting dollars with these firms in 2017.

While we should all laud the success of the program, there has been concern that current law did not appropriately address concerns of what happens to awards and contracts of VOSB and SDVOSB when the veteran owner dies.

The sudden death of a veteran could bring significant upheaval for a small business as they lose their VA contracts, which can impact not only the veteran's family, but employees as well.

H.R. 5044 would clarify and authorize the spouses of veterans who died with less than a 100-percent disability rating to maintain VOSB and SDVOSB status for up to 3 years following the veteran's death.

I believe this change to current law is an appropriate way to continue the success of the Vets First Program without hurting other veteran firms.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Chairman CHABOT, for introducing this bill, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5044, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of H.R. 5044. The gentleman has brought a really important point forward.

Currently, if a veteran's death results in their small business becoming less than 51 percent owned by a service-disabled veteran, the surviving spouse can acquire the veteran's ownership interest if the veteran had a 100-percent disability rating. This allows the surviving spouse to keep their loved one's small business status.

However, the surviving spouse of a deceased veteran who had less than a 100-percent disability is not allowed to do the same.

This is a clear-cut case, I think, of spirit and intent of the law. I don't think anyone intended for a 60-percent service-disabled veteran who maybe lost a limb in combat, and then who dies, for their spouse to lose their eligibility. It is a really important point to bring up.

This bill will now permit a surviving spouse to maintain a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business status