

more accessible VA healthcare system for our Nation's heroes.

I am grateful to the sponsor of the VA HELP Act, my colleague and friend, Congressman MIKE BOST of Illinois. MIKE is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, a tireless advocate for veterans and their families, and, I might add, a veteran himself.

Mr. Speaker, I thank him for his leadership on this bill. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5864, as amended, the VA Hospitals Establishing Leadership Performance Act, or VA HELP Act.

Due to nationwide shortages, nuanced certification and licensing requirements, and complex position descriptions, human resource professionals working in the healthcare industry must possess a unique set of skills and qualifications.

Human resource professionals working within the VA must further develop their skills while learning how to leverage the many hiring initiatives, budgetary concerns, and Federal resources in a way that can compete with the private sector's financial incentives.

The VA HELP Act is an effort to assist the VA in finding the unique talent it needs to fill these health-specific human resource officers by requiring the VA to establish qualifications and standardized performance metrics for each human resource position within VHA.

By further defining the human resource positions within VHA and standardizing performance metrics, the VA will be able to more easily to attract, access, and retain quality human resource officers.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST), the chairman of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee, who also is a Marine veteran who has drunk from the Devil Dog fountain at Belleau Wood.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman. As all of us here know today, the mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs is the care for those who have borne the battle.

When our heroes transition from the military, they deserve to have access to quality healthcare and services. Unfortunately, the VA continues to fall short on the promises, due, in part, to failures in human resource offices. This issue hit close to home for me after the VA National Center for Patient Safety surveyed the Marion VA Medical Center in my district.

The Marion survey showed a decline in key factors, such as communication between management and staff, and reporting problems to management. The Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on

Oversight and Investigations staff then visited Marion in order to get a firsthand look at the issues at the facility.

During that site visit, multiple employees raised concerns about poor management, poor communication, distrust between leadership and management, and the lack of accountability. Despite several efforts to encourage the VA headquarters leadership to address these problems, limited actions have been taken, and my office continues to receive complaints.

The common thread throughout has been the issue in the human resource department. HR management is a critical part of delivering quality healthcare. HR is responsible for recruiting and retaining highly qualified professionals, and the current status quo within the VHA's HR offices cannot continue.

That is why I introduced H.R. 5854, the VA HELP Act, with Representative SINEMA. This bipartisan, straightforward legislation instructs the VA Secretary to establish qualifications for HR positions within the VHA, and to set performance metrics for these positions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members of the House to support H.R. 5864 to ensure that our Nation's veterans are being provided the best possible care from VA employees. I thank the chairman of the committee, Chairman ROE, and Ranking Member TAKANO for supporting this.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 5864, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 5864, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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. 5864, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

VETERANS SERVING VETERANS ACT OF 2018

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5938) to amend the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a vacancy and recruitment database to facilitate the recruitment of certain members of the Armed

Forces to satisfy the occupational needs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to establish and implement a training and certification program for intermediate care technicians in that Department, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5938

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 Serving Veterans Act of 2018".

SEC. 2. RECRUITMENT DATABASE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Section 208 of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act (Public Law 115-46; 38 U.S.C. 701 note) is amended as follows:

(1) In subsection (a)—

(A) in the matter proceeding paragraph (1), by striking "a single database" and inserting "and maintain a single searchable database (to be known as the 'Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs Recruitment Database')";

(B) in paragraph (1), by striking "and" and inserting a semicolon;

(C) in paragraph (2), by striking the period at the end and inserting "and"; and

(D) by adding after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph:

"(3) with respect to each vacant position under paragraphs (1) and (2)—

"(A) the military occupational specialty or skill that corresponds to the position, as determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense; and

"(B) each qualified member of the Armed Forces who may be recruited to fill the position before such qualified member of the Armed Forces has been discharged and released from active duty."

(2) By redesignating subsections (b), (c), and (d) as subsections (f), (g), and (h), respectively.

(3) By inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsections:

"(b) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.—Subject to

subsection (c), the database established under subsection (a) shall include, with respect to each qualified member of the Armed Forces, the following information:

"(1) The name and contact information of the qualified member of the Armed Forces.

"(2) The date on which the qualified member of the Armed Forces is expected to be discharged and released from active duty.

"(3) Each military occupational specialty currently or previously assigned to the qualified member of the Armed Forces.

"(c) AVAILABILITY.—Information in the database shall be available to offices, officials, and employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs to the extent the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines appropriate.

"(d) EXPEDITED HIRING PROCEDURES.—The Secretary shall hire qualified members of the Armed Forces who apply for vacant positions listed in the database established under subsection (a) without regard to the provisions of subchapter I of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code.

"(e) RELOCATION BONUS.—The Secretary may authorize a relocation bonus, in an amount determined appropriate by the Secretary and subject to the same limitations as in the case of the authority provided under section 5753 of title 5, to any qualified member of the Armed Forces who has accepted a position listed in the database established under subsection (a)."

(4) In subsection (g)(1), as redesignated in paragraph (2), by striking "subsection (b)" and inserting "subsection (g)".

(5) In subsection (h), as redesignated in paragraph (2), by striking “of this Act” and inserting “of the Veterans Serving Veterans Act of 2018, and annually thereafter”.

(6) By adding after subsection (h), as redesignated in paragraph (2), the following new subsection:

“(i) **QUALIFIED MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES DEFINED.**—In this section, the term ‘qualified member of the Armed Forces’ means a member of the Armed Forces—

“(1) described in section 1142(a) of title 10;

“(2) who elects to be listed in the database established under subsection (a); and

“(3) who has been determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to have a military occupational specialty that corresponds to a vacant position described in subsection (a).”.

(b) **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a plan to implement, including a timeline, section 208 of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act (Public Law 115-46; 38 U.S.C. 701 note), as amended by this section.

SEC. 3. INTERMEDIATE CARE TECHNICIAN TRAINING PROGRAM.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement a program to train and certify covered veterans to work as intermediate care technicians in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) **LOCATIONS.**—

(1) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Secretary shall establish centers at medical facilities of the Department selected by the Secretary for the purposes of carrying out the program under subsection (a).

(2) **SELECTION OF MEDICAL FACILITIES.**—In selecting a medical facility of the Department under this subsection to serve as a center, the Secretary shall consider—

(A) the experience and success of the facility in training intermediate care technicians; and

(B) the availability of resources of the facility to train intermediate care technicians.

(c) **COVERED VETERAN DEFINED.**—In this section, the term “covered veteran” means a veteran whom the Secretary determines served as a basic health care technician while serving in the Armed Forces.

SEC. 4. NO AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out section 208 of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act (Public Law 115-46; 38 U.S.C. 701 note), as amended by section 2 of this Act, or to carry out section 3 of this Act. Such sections shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized to be appropriated for such purpose.

SEC. 5. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized to be appropriated.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) 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 have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material.

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. 5938, as amended, the Veterans Serving Veterans Act. This bill is sponsored by my friend and fellow committee member, the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN).

Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for her hard work and leadership on this bill on behalf of our Nation’s veterans in Puerto Rico and across the country. The Veterans Serving Veterans Act contains two provisions that would help alleviate staffing shortages at the Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities and create employment opportunities for servicemembers separating from the Armed Forces.

First, it would expand VA’s recruiting database to include information about soon-to-be separated servicemembers whose military training and experience match open positions within the VA healthcare system. It is common sense.

Second, it would expand an existing pilot program that recruits former medics to serve as intermediate care technicians in VA medical facilities. We all know that, all other things being equal, veterans prefer being seen and treated by their peers. This bill would create a pathway for that to happen more often, while addressing the serious recruitment issues that continue to hamper VA medical facilities coast to coast.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5938, as amended, the Veterans Serving Veterans Act of 2018.

Veterans exit the military with the highest quality of education and experience in their respective fields. We, along with the private sector, have worked diligently to ensure servicemembers are able to translate their skills to the private industry. However, this bill takes our efforts a step further by allowing the VA to create a searchable vacancy and recruitment database containing each VA vacancy and the corresponding military occupation code or skill that corresponds to the positions.

The database will also allow interested servicemembers to opt in to be included in the database, so that the VA may begin recruiting transitioning servicemembers to fill vacant positions before their discharges are complete.

In addition to the creation of the database, the bill also allows the Secretary to create a pilot program to train servicemembers who served as basic healthcare technicians while

serving in the Armed Forces to be trained as intermediate care technicians at the VHA.

By creating a pipeline from service to bedside, the VA can better treat the 9 million veterans who depend on its services.

I appreciate the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN) for her hard work on this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, before I yield to our next speaker, I want to tell Members about this young woman. She represents the island of Puerto Rico, and before one of the hurricanes hit, I called her on the phone just moments before the hurricane. I was amazed that I even got through.

Following that, we led a group. I came to visit the hospital and the island of Puerto Rico, and the passion that she shows for the people she represents, and the passion she shows for veterans, is second to none.

I wanted to pass that along. I saw something in this young woman down there that I had not seen before I visited her beautiful island.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN), a member of the Veterans Affairs’ Committee.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ROE for, first of all, visiting the island. This is the first time ever the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs ever visited Puerto Rico. I thank the gentleman for that, for his leadership, and for his commitment, and the ranking member’s commitment, during the last months.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of my bill, H.R. 5938, the Veterans Serving Veterans Act of 2018. This bill seeks to alleviate chronic staffing shortages that currently affect the Department of Veterans Affairs, which hinders their ability to serve our veterans in an effective and timely manner.

This issue never fails to come up during those meetings with veterans residing in Puerto Rico and is often discussed by my colleagues here in the House. H.R. 5938 seeks a remedial option to this issue by doing two things.

First, amending section 208 of the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017 to include the military occupational specialties of soon-to-be discharged servicemembers that correspond to vacant positions at the VA in the recruiting database, as well as servicemembers’ contact information and the date of discharge. Inclusion in the database is completely optional for those servicemembers. If included, they will potentially be matched for vacant positions at the VA that correspond with the skills they acquired with the Department of Defense.

Second, the bill will also require the VA to implement a program to train

and certify former Department of Defense healthcare technicians as intermediate care technicians, ICTs, to address the large demand for healthcare providers at the Veterans Health Administration.

These very skilled technicians trained by the DOD have difficulty gaining employment in their field after separating from the Armed Forces due to the lack of a certification. At the same time, the VHA has a significant shortage of providers. The ICT program has a high satisfaction rate and helps fill this void.

Servicemembers are a remarkable asset upon transitioning from the Department of Defense. We should do everything we can do to foster this transition and facilitate this opportunity to our men and women in uniform to serve our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I need to again thank Chairman ROE for his leadership. For me, it is an honor to serve on this committee with a gentleman who has this commitment and who works in a bipartisan manner with Ranking Member WALZ and Congressman TAKANO. I thank the gentlemen for their support. It is an honor to improve so many bills like this with these amendments.

Their leadership and assistance in moving this bill forward make us all proud, so I urge all my colleagues to vote in favor of this bill.

□ 1930

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 5938, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 5938, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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. 5938, 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.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CREATION OF ON-SITE TREATMENT SYSTEMS AFFORDING VETERANS IMPROVEMENTS AND NUMEROUS GENERAL SAFETY ENHANCEMENTS ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5974) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to use on-site regulated medical waste treatment systems at certain Department of Veterans Affairs facilities, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5974

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 "Department of Veterans Affairs Creation of On-Site Treatment Systems Affording Veterans Improvements and Numerous General Safety Enhancements Act" or the "VA COST SAVINGS Enhancements Act".

SEC. 2. USE OF ON-SITE REGULATED MEDICAL WASTE TREATMENT SYSTEMS AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FACILITIES.

(a) IDENTIFICATION OF FACILITIES.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall identify Department of Veterans Affairs facilities that would benefit from cost savings associated with the use of an on-site regulated medical waste treatment system over a five-year period.

(b) REGULATED MEDICAL WASTE COST ANALYSIS MODEL.—For purposes of carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall develop a uniform regulated medical waste cost analysis model to be used to determine the cost savings associated with the use of an on-site regulated medical waste treatment system at Department facilities. Such model shall be designed to calculate savings based on—

(1) the cost of treating regulated medical waste at an off-site location under a contract with a non-Department entity, compared to

(2) the cost of treating regulated medical waste on-site, based on the equipment specification of treatment system manufacturers, with capital costs amortized over a ten-year period.

(c) INSTALLATION.—At each Department facility identified under subsection (a), the Secretary shall secure, install, and operate an on-site regulated medical waste treatment system.

(d) USE OF BLANKET PURCHASE AGREEMENT.—Any medical waste treatment system purchased pursuant to this section shall be purchased under the blanket purchase agreement known as the "VHA Regulated Medical Waste On-Site Treatment Equipment Systems Blanket Purchase Agreement" or any successor, contract, agreement, or other arrangement.

(e) REGULATED MEDICAL WASTE DEFINED.—In this section, the term "regulated medical waste" has the meaning given such term under section 173.134(a)(5) of title 49, Code of Federal Regulations, concerning regulated medical waste and infectious substances, or any successor regulation, except that, in the case of an applicable State law that is more expansive, the definition in the State law shall apply.

SEC. 3. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the requirements of this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized to be appropriated.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) 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 have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material.

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. 5974, as amended, the Department of Veterans Affairs Creation of On-Site Treatment Systems Affording Veterans Improvements and Numerous General Safety Enhancements Act, or, perhaps the most creative naming of a bill since I have been in Congress, the VA COST SAVINGS Enhancements Act.

This bill will require VA to identify facilities that could benefit from onsite medical waste management and, in those facilities, install and operate onsite medical waste treatment capabilities.

The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention both consider onsite medical waste management to be a best practice. However, only a relatively small percentage of VA medical facilities have installed onsite sterilization equipment to date.

By considering which VA medical facilities could find value in onsite medical waste management and making a deliberate effort to transition those facilities away from off-site medical waste management arrangements, VA could achieve considerable savings of taxpayer dollars that could, in turn, be used to fund other VA initiatives. It would also result in more VA facilities utilizing a waste disposal method that is both safer and more environmentally friendly.

This bill is sponsored by Congressman JEFF DENHAM from California, and I thank him for bringing this issue to the committee's attention. I applaud the gentleman for his creativity in coming up with an acronym for a bill of this size.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5974, as amended, the Department of Veterans Affairs Creation of On-Site Treatment Systems Affording Veterans Improvements and Numerous General Safety Enhancements Act, otherwise known as the VA COST SAVINGS Enhancements Act.

Mr. Speaker, the current funding issues currently surrounding VA are evidence of the need for creative cost savings measures. I must thank Representative DENHAM in identifying and championing one such creative solution.

The VA COST SAVINGS Enhancements Act simply asks VHA to review its current medical waste disposal system and determine whether hosting this disposal onsite would result in cost savings over the next 5 years. If so, then the facility is required to implement onsite disposal.

Onsite medical waste disposal is safer and far more efficient in most cases, and this bill would simply require VHA to ensure they are achieving the safest and most cost-effective method of medical waste disposal.

Again, I thank Representative DENHAM for his work on the bill, and I