

Our veterans and their survivors deserve the best care possible. The VA benefits application process can be confusing. Congress has taken action to reduce confusion and ease the application process.

I remember when, only a few years ago, initial claims were taking more than a year. Today, initial disability claims are being completed in less than 160 days. This is, in part, due to streamlining the application process and providing more information to veterans.

As I learned during the codel to Puerto Rico, in emergencies like Hurricane Maria, veterans need to know how the VA can help them prepare for the next storm. They need to know that they can get additional supplies of medication. Veterans need to know where to go in an emergency when communications are disrupted. They also need to know how to apply for assistance and emergency benefits after a disaster like Hurricane Maria because these disasters will happen again.

The VA fact sheet on natural disasters, which tells veterans and their families which website to go to and where to call when their benefits are interrupted due to natural disasters, is only available in English. Yet, both the Philippines and Puerto Rico experience natural disasters like hurricanes, typhoons, and earthquakes.

Mandating that VA fact sheets are made available in more than one language is yet another example of ways we can eliminate barriers for our veterans, streamline the application process, and help them get to the right resources when there is an emergency. Providing fact sheets in Tagalog and Spanish could even save lives.

Madam Speaker, I wholeheartedly support H.R. 2943, as amended, and, again, I ask my colleagues to join me in support of this bill.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CASTOR of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2943, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make all fact sheets of the Department of Veterans Affairs in English, Spanish, and Tagalog."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HELPING EXPAND AND LAUNCH TRANSITIONAL HEALTH FOR WOMEN VETERANS ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2942) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out the

Women's Health Transition Training pilot program through at least fiscal year 2020, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2942

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 "Helping Expand and Launch Transitional Health for Women Veterans Act" or "HEALTH Act".

SEC. 2. ENCOURAGEMENT OF PARTICIPATION IN WOMEN'S HEALTH TRANSITION TRAINING PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) DURATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out the Women's Health Transition Training pilot program (in this section referred to as the "pilot program") until at least September 30, 2020.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than September 30, 2020, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the pilot program that includes the following:

(1) For the period since the commencement of the pilot program—

(A) the number of women members by military department (with respect to Department of the Navy, separately for the Navy and Marine Corps) who participated in the pilot program;

(B) the number of courses held under the pilot program; and

(C) the locations at which such courses were held, and the number of seats available and the number of participants at each such location.

(2) With respect to the number of members who participated in the pilot program as specified under paragraph (1)—

(A) the number who enrolled in the health care system established under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) the number who attended at least one health care appointment at a medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(3) Data relating to—

(A) satisfaction with courses held under the pilot program;

(B) improved awareness of health care services administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

(C) any other available statistics regarding the pilot program.

(4) A discussion of regulatory, legal, or resource barriers to—

(A) making the pilot program permanent to enable access by a greater number of women members at locations throughout the United States;

(B) offering the pilot program online for women members who are unable to attend courses held under the pilot program in person; and

(C) the feasibility of automatically enrolling pilot program participants in the health care system established under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code.

(c) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term "appropriate congressional committees" means the Committees on Veterans' Affairs and the Committees on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 2942, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, women veterans are the fastest growing demographic within the veteran population yet underutilize VA healthcare resources. This is primarily due to misperceptions about eligibility and available resources.

Many women leaving the military may not realize that they are eligible to use VA services, nor that VA offers extensive gender-specific care, such as mammography; prenatal, maternity, and infertility care; and mental healthcare that addresses complex trauma, including military sexual trauma, otherwise known as MST, and combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

The VA and U.S. Air Force Women's Health Transition Training pilot program works to address issues commonly experienced by women veterans when accessing VA care. This successful improvement to the Transition Assistance Program, or the TAP, is jointly run by the USAF and VA. Transitioning women servicemembers can attend an additional day of TAP to learn about women's healthcare, counseling, and social services available at the VA to ensure that they receive a warm handoff between the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration.

Mr. CISNEROS' bill would expand the Women's Health Transition Training pilot program to more locations and authorizes the program through the end of fiscal year 2020.

This great legislation has my full support.

Madam Speaker, although women are the fastest growing cohort of veterans, women veterans are less likely to seek care and services at VA. This bill aims to address that and make the VA more accessible and responsive to women veterans.

Madam Speaker, this pilot program educates transitioning servicewomen about VA's healthcare services. The data collected from this pilot program can be applied to the Transition Assistance Program to better meet the needs of all transitioning servicemembers.

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. CISNEROS for his hard work on this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2942, as amended, the Helping Expand and Launch Transitional Health, or HEALTH, for Women Veterans Act.

I thank and congratulate Representative CISNEROS on this very good bill,

and I thank the chairman and the ranking member for bringing this bill forward.

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Women are joining the armed services in record numbers, Madam Speaker, and are an important part of the military and veteran communities. In recognition of the brave services these women are providing our country, it is incumbent on us to ensure that they are aware of the many benefits afforded to them.

Unfortunately, far too many women veterans are unaware of the healthcare services available for women through the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration. That is why VA and the Air Force partnered together to create a Women's Health Transition Training pilot program.

The pilot program provides servicewomen who are on the verge of leaving the military with information about the care they may be eligible to receive from VA, how to enroll in VA, and how to successfully transition to civilian life. In short, it empowers women to make informed decisions about their healthcare by educating them about the benefits available.

As of June 5, there have been 50 pilot sessions, Madam Speaker, and the women who have attended those sessions have reported a 98 percent satisfaction rate.

The Helping Expand and Launch Transitional Health for Women Veterans Act would extend the Women's Health Transition Training pilot program through fiscal year 2020 to ensure that women leaving the military continue to benefit from it.

This bill is sponsored, again, by Representative Gil Cisneros from California, and I thank the gentleman for his work. It is a very, very important bill.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CISNEROS), a veteran himself, the author of this legislation, and a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. CISNEROS. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding, and I again want to thank the gentleman from Florida for his support on this bill as well.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank Chairman TAKANO and Ranking Member ROE of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee for working with me to ensure my bill passed out of committee on a bipartisan basis.

Today, I rise to ask my colleagues for their support on my bill, H.R. 2942, the Helping Expand and Launch Transitional Health for Women Veterans Act, introduced with my colleague and fellow veteran, Congresswoman CHRISSY HOULAHAN.

As a Navy veteran, one of my top priorities is ensuring that active service-

members transitioning into the civilian world are connected to the VA system and provided the best education and tools needed to succeed.

Despite being the fastest growing cohort in our military community, many servicewomen face unique challenges with their VA benefits. Studies have shown that women veterans, on average, connect with the VA nearly 3 years after military service, which can result in higher rates of physical and mental health issues. In a male-dominated VA system, it is not surprising why women veterans often report that they are uncomfortable seeking women-specific care.

My bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to extend an ongoing initiative with the Air Force and the Transition Assistance Program, which educates transitioning servicewomen about women's healthcare at the VA.

Specifically, the bill would mandate an extension of the program across all military service branches and require a report on the feasibility of making it permanent. Participants of this pilot program report an increased likelihood to use VA healthcare and have shown higher rates of confidence with the VA.

It is time our women servicemembers and veterans receive the care they need, and this bill will do just that. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of my bill to ensure that, when servicewomen transition to civilian life, they are provided with the information that will help them navigate their VA benefits in a commonsense way.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I have no other speakers, and I am prepared to close.

I want to say that this is an outstanding bill. I am glad we worked on this bill because we have a lot of women veterans who need this, and I want to make it permanent. So, again, let's pass this bill as soon as possible and get it to the Senate.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I am also prepared to close.

I will say in my final remarks that I urge all of my colleagues to support our women veterans by joining me in passing this very important legislation, H.R. 2942, 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 California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2942, 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.

RYAN KULES SPECIALLY ADAPTIVE HOUSING IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2019

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3504) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for improvements to the specially adapted housing program and educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3504

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 "Ryan Kules Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. PRIORITY IN AWARD OF SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING GRANTS TO SERIOUSLY ILL VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) PRIORITY FOR SERIOUSLY ILL VETERANS.—(1) In providing assistance under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to seriously ill veterans.

“(2) In this section, the term 'seriously ill veteran' shall have the meaning given such term by the Secretary.”

(b) DEFINITION OF SERIOUSLY ILL VETERAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—By not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(A) determine the meaning of the term "seriously ill veteran" for purposes of subsection (d) of section 2101 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a); and

(B) submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives the meaning of such term as so determined.

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The definition of "seriously ill veteran" as determined under paragraph (1) shall apply for purposes of such subsection (d) beginning on the date that is 30 days after the date on which the Secretary submits to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives the definition of such term as so determined.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on October 1, 2020, and apply with respect to assistance provided on or after that date.

SEC. 3. INCREASE IN AMOUNTS OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED.

(a) INCREASE OF NUMBER OF GRANTS PER VETERAN.—Section 2102(d)(3) of such title is amended by striking "three" and inserting "six".

(b) INCREASE IN NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS AUTHORIZED TO BE APPROVED.—Section 2101(a)(4) of such title is amended by striking "30 applications" and inserting "120 applications".

(c) INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR ADAPTATION TO VETERAN'S RESIDENCE.—Section 2102(b)(2) of such title is amended by striking "\$12,000" and inserting "\$19,733".

(d) INCREASE IN AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR ACQUISITION OF HOUSING WITH SPECIAL FEATURES.—Section 2102(d)(1) of such title is amended by striking "\$63,780" and inserting "\$98,492".

(e) INCREASE IN AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR ADAPTATIONS TO VETERANS' RESIDENCES.—Section 2102(d)(2) of such title