

VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
TRAINING ACT OF 2023

Mr. ELLZEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1606) to amend the Small Business Act to codify the Boots to Business Program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.  
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1606

*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 “Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2023”.

**SEC. 2. BOOTS TO BUSINESS PROGRAM.**

Section 32 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(h) BOOTS TO BUSINESS PROGRAM.—

“(1) COVERED INDIVIDUAL DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ‘covered individual’ means—

“(A) a member of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard or Reserves;

“(B) an individual who is participating in the Transition Assistance Program established under section 1144 of title 10, United States Code;

“(C) an individual who—

“(i) served on active duty in any branch of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard or Reserves; and

“(ii) was discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable; and

“(D) a spouse or dependent of an individual described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C).

“(2) ESTABLISHMENT.—During the period beginning on the date of enactment of this subsection and ending on September 30, 2028, the Administrator shall carry out a program to be known as the ‘Boots to Business Program’ to provide entrepreneurship training to covered individuals.

“(3) GOALS.—The goals of the Boots to Business Program are to—

“(A) provide assistance and in-depth training to covered individuals interested in business ownership; and

“(B) provide covered individuals with the tools, skills, and knowledge necessary to identify a business opportunity, draft a business plan, identify sources of capital, connect with local resources for small business concerns, and start up a small business concern.

“(4) PROGRAM COMPONENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Boots to Business Program may include—

“(i) a presentation providing exposure to the considerations involved in self-employment and ownership of a small business concern;

“(ii) an online, self-study course focused on the basic skills of entrepreneurship, the language of business, and the considerations involved in self-employment and ownership of a small business concern;

“(iii) an in-person classroom instruction component providing an introduction to the foundations of self employment and ownership of a small business concern; and

“(iv) in-depth training delivered through online instruction, including an online course that leads to the creation of a business plan.

“(B) COLLABORATION.—The Administrator may—

“(i) collaborate with public and private entities to develop course curricula for the Boots to Business Program; and

“(ii) modify program components in coordination with entities participating in a

Warriors in Transition program, as defined in section 738(e) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (10 U.S.C. 1071 note).

“(C) USE OF RESOURCE PARTNERS AND DISTRICT OFFICES.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall—

“(I) ensure that Veteran Business Outreach Centers regularly participate, on a nationwide basis, in the Boots to Business Program; and

“(II) to the maximum extent practicable, use district offices of the Administration and a variety of other resource partners and entities in administering the Boots to Business Program.

“(ii) GRANT AUTHORITY.—In carrying out clause (i), the Administrator may make grants, subject to the availability of appropriations in advance, to Veteran Business Outreach Centers, other resource partners, or other entities to carry out components of the Boots to Business Program.

“(D) AVAILABILITY TO DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.—The Administrator shall make available to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor information regarding the Boots to Business Program, including all course materials and outreach materials related to the Boots to Business Program, for inclusion on the websites of the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor relating to the Transition Assistance Program, in the Transition Assistance Program manual, and in other relevant materials available for distribution from the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor.

“(E) AVAILABILITY TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—In consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator shall make available for distribution and display on the website of the Department of Veterans Affairs and at local facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs outreach materials regarding the Boots to Business Program, which shall, at a minimum—

“(i) describe the Boots to Business Program and the services provided; and

“(ii) include eligibility requirements for participating in the Boots to Business Program.

“(F) AVAILABILITY TO OTHER PARTICIPATING AGENCIES.—The Administrator shall ensure information regarding the Boots to Business program, including all course materials and outreach materials related to the Boots to Business Program, is made available to other participating agencies in the Transition Assistance Program and upon request of other agencies.

“(5) COMPETITIVE BIDDING PROCEDURES.—The Administration shall use relevant competitive bidding procedures with respect to any contract or cooperative agreement executed by the Administration under the Boots to Business Program.

“(6) PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY.—Not later than 30 days before the deadline for submitting applications for any funding opportunity under the Boots to Business Program, the Administration shall publish a notice of the funding opportunity.

“(7) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this subsection, and not less frequently than annually thereafter, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives a report on the performance and effectiveness of the Boots to Business Program, which—

“(A) may be included as part of another report submitted to such committees by the

Administrator related to the Office of Veterans Business Development; and

“(B) shall summarize available information relating to—

“(i) grants awarded under paragraph (4)(C);

“(ii) the total cost of the Boots to Business Program;

“(iii) the number of program participants using each component of the Boots to Business Program;

“(iv) the completion rates for each component of the Boots to Business Program;

“(v) to the extent possible—

“(I) the demographics of program participants, to include gender, age, race, ethnicity, and relationship to military;

“(II) the number of program participants that connect with a district office of the Administration, a Veteran Business Outreach Center, or another resource partner of the Administration;

“(III) the number of program participants that start a small business concern;

“(IV) the results of the Boots to Business and Boots to Business Reboot course quality surveys conducted by the Office of Veterans Business Development before and after attending each of those courses, including a summary of any comments received from program participants;

“(V) the results of the Boots to Business Program outcome surveys conducted by the Office of Veterans Business Development, including a summary of any comments received from program participants; and

“(VI) the results of other germane participant satisfaction surveys;

“(C) an evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the Boots to Business Program based on each geographic region covered by the Administration during the most recent fiscal year;

“(D) an assessment of additional performance outcome measures for the Boots to Business Program, as identified by the Administrator;

“(E) any recommendations of the Administrator for improvement of the Boots to Business Program, which may include expansion of the types of individuals who are covered individuals;

“(F) an explanation of how the Boots to Business Program has been integrated with other transition programs and related resources of the Administration and other Federal agencies; and

“(G) any additional information the Administrator determines necessary.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ELLZEY) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ELLZEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to address the American people. I rise in support of H.R. 1606, the Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2023.

As a veteran, I know that going from military life to civilian life can be

complicated. The military is great at training our servicemembers to do their jobs, Mr. Speaker. You and I both know that.

They train them to be the most lethal force on the planet—of which you were one—to defend and protect the people of the United States. What they do not do is effectively help servicemembers or train them to become civilians.

The Boots to Business Program will help fill that gap. This program will help our veterans translate the skills that they acquired during their years of military service to the tools that would be needed to be successful in civilian life. Administered through the Office of Veterans Business Development in the Small Business Administration, the Boots to Business Program offers servicemembers and military spouses moving from military to civilian life a foundational two-day, in-person course for an introduction to business ownership.

The foundational course can be followed by optional online courses on topics including market research, business fundamentals, and revenue readiness. The Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2023 authorizes this program for 5 years. We must help the men and women who so bravely served our country. Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2023 is one way to help.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I applaud Representative SCHNEIDER, Chairman WILLIAMS, Representative MCGARVEY, and Representative ELLZEY for their dedication and commitment to our Nation's veterans.

Mr. SCHNEIDER has been a long-time champion of this legislation to codify the Boots to Business Program. Over the years, the committee has held a number of hearings examining SBA's programs that benefit veteran entrepreneurship, and we have heard from scores of veterans that the program has been a resounding success.

In fiscal year 2022, nearly 24,000 veterans, transitioning servicemembers, and military spouses received Boots to Business entrepreneurship training. Starting a business is not for the faint of heart. It takes courage, perseverance, resourcefulness, and leadership to launch a successful enterprise. Many of these qualities are inherent in those that serve our country.

Despite the skills and expertise, many servicemembers have difficulty transitioning to civilian life. A recent survey conducted by the Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families found 44 percent expressed difficulty with transitioning from military life, and 53 percent say they did not know what they wanted to do as civilians.

It is imperative that we enact this legislation and provide the certainty to

veterans that this training will continue to be available to them as they leave the service.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1606, the Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ELLZEY. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2023, legislation I was proud to introduce with my colleagues, Chair ROGER WILLIAMS of Texas; MORGAN MCGARVEY of Kentucky; and JAKE ELLZEY, also from Texas.

This bipartisan bill codifies the existing Boots to Business Program at the Small Business Administration, which provides business training programs for veterans and their families. Innovation and entrepreneurship are critical to a healthy, growing economy.

Today, the United States is enjoying a renaissance in entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurs not only start new businesses, they bring new ideas and new inventions to life. They create new industries and disrupt existing ones. The companies they build not only create new jobs, but are pillars in our local communities.

A recent Forbes article noted that 16 percent of the U.S. workforce are engaged in entrepreneurial pursuits, up almost 30 percent since the start of the pandemic, and 40 percent of those are women.

Furthermore, our Nation's economy relies on small business and entrepreneurship. U.S. small businesses generate approximately 44 percent of our total economic activity each year; they employ almost half of all working Americans and produce almost two-thirds of new jobs.

So who are these people fueling our economic vitality? A broad review of the business literature describing the traits of successful entrepreneurs show some common themes. These include: creativity and desire to innovate; the ability to collaborate and build strong teams; a willingness to take measured risks; decisiveness; versatility; adaptability; persistence; resilience; and grit.

This list also fairly describes the men and women who serve our Nation in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Space Force. Success in our military requires the very same traits that are considered key success factors in business.

Our military is made up of the best and the brightest our country has to offer. They reflect who we are as a Nation and encompass the full diversity of our people. Their success in their service depends on the same types of leadership talent that will make them capable business leaders in the future.

They quickly solve problems, they innovate, and they take uncertain situations and find ways to get things done.

What the Boots to Business Program does so well is help translate the lessons and skills cultivated during military service into the skills necessary for success in civilian life.

Since 2013, the Boots to Business Program has elevated the potential of our Nation's veterans by offering free, multiweek, in-depth courses to over 150,000 existing servicemembers and their spouses. The Boots to Business curriculum covers the fundamentals of starting a business, teaching participants such important skills as market research, organizational design, and financial management.

Our bill, the Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2023, will formally codify the Boots to Business Program into law, ensuring existing and future servicemembers can reliably take advantage of this valuable opportunity for years to come.

This bill will fuel small-business-driven growth well into the future by creating a pipeline of skilled and hard-working entrepreneurs. It means we can continue to give back to the men and women who selflessly risked their lives in our service while also investing in our economic future by building a driven and skilled entrepreneur force from our Nation's most ambitious and achieving leaders.

I am pleased and grateful for the strong bipartisan support this bill has received in committee. I once again thank Chair WILLIAMS and Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ for helping to bring this bill forward, and I thank the Speaker for bringing this important legislation to the House floor today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support the Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2023.

Mr. ELLZEY. Mr. Speaker, I once again thank Chair WILLIAMS, Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ, and Mr. SCHNEIDER for this very important bill that starts us down the right path, but it is only a beginning.

After our Nation's veterans have given so much for their country, we have an obligation to give them the tools and resources to help them transition back to civilian life. The Boots to Business Program, incorporated in this bill, is an example of a program offered by the Federal Government that actually accomplishes a mission. It helps veterans transfer the skills they already have gained from their military service to the private sector with the goal of starting their own small business.

Oftentimes, some of the biggest obstacles facing veteran entrepreneurship is not knowing where to obtain a loan. Through H.R. 1606 and the Boots to Business Program, our veterans can be taught how to navigate that difficult process.

Veterans already have the intangible leadership skills to succeed in any arena; and, above all else, this program

teaches them how to best transfer these skills into the private sector.

I again urge my colleagues to support this legislation, which provides counseling and resources our veterans need to begin their journey in starting their own small business.

Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that we have lost friends in combat. We lost them 16, 20 years ago. We are losing them today, too. We are losing them at a rate that is unsustainable, 22 a day.

Until the DOD and the VA transition to where they hand off one well-trained soldier, sailor, airman, or marine into a well-trained civilian, we must always do more. This is a good start.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank all of our veterans who have dedicated their lives to service. Their dedication to our country and commitment to preserving our freedoms is greatly appreciated.

As our Nation's servicemembers complete their final tour and begin their transition back to civilian life, it is important that we provide opportunities for them to pursue the American Dream. Owning and running a successful small business is the epitome of that dream.

Codifying the Boots to Business Program would allow thousands of servicemembers, their spouses, and veterans to receive vital training on how to build a successful small business.

I thank Mr. SCHNEIDER, Chairman WILLIAMS, Mr. MCGARVEY, and Mr. ELLZEY for their bipartisan work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the Veterans Entrepreneurship Training Act, as amended, and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1606, the Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act.

This bipartisan legislation provides statutory authority for the Boots to Business Program, which provides entrepreneurship training to individuals including veterans and active members of the Armed Forces, to be administered by the Small Business Administration.

The Boots to Business program provides entrepreneurship education and training, offering a general understanding of entrepreneurship and relevant business ownership principles.

Through this program, veterans learn about the abilities, information, and tools required to start a business, such as how to create a business plan and the resources offered by the Small Business Administration.

Active-Duty Service members, including National Guard and Reserves, Veterans, and their spouses are eligible to participate in the program.

Our veterans dedicated their lives to protecting the freedom of all Americans and it is critical that they are armed with the tools, resources, and training to be successful as they return to civilian life.

This bill plays an important role in smoothing that transition and constitutes an important

step in preparing veterans to thrive in the private sector.

Notably, many of the same skills that are fundamental in entrepreneurship and business ownership have already been developed in veterans through their time in the military, including leadership, problem solving, and discipline.

This program will help veterans leverage those skill sets towards career success in civilian life.

I am proud to say that Houston is home to over 280,000 veterans and is ranked 10th nationally for the newest businesses per capita.

This bill will help connect Houston's veterans with the wealth of opportunities for small business entrepreneurship across the city.

Further, this bill will help address the ongoing crisis of homelessness among America's veterans on a national scale.

Today, more than 1 in 10 people experiencing homelessness are veterans who fearlessly and selflessly served our Nation.

They have kept their promise to serve our Nation; they have willingly risked their lives to protect the country we all love.

We must now ensure that we keep our promises to our veterans and provide them with the support they deserve as they pursue success in civilian life.

This bill is an important part of that effort.

By providing entrepreneurship training and support, we can help give veterans the tools they need to get back on their feet and achieve greater financial security.

Our Nation has a proud legacy of appreciation and commitment to the men and women who have worn the uniform in defense of this country.

We must be united in seeing that every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine is welcomed back with all the care and compassion this grateful Nation can bestow.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1606 and in equipping our veterans with the tools, resources, and training for their long-term success.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ELLZEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1606, 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. ELLZEY. 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.

#### FISCAL YEAR 2023 VETERANS AFFAIRS MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 30) to authorize major medical facility projects for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2023, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 30

*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 "Fiscal Year 2023 Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Authorization Act".

#### SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY PROJECTS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility projects in fiscal year 2023 at the locations specified and in an amount for each project not to exceed the amount specified for such location:

(1) Construction of a community-based outpatient clinic and national cemetery in Alameda, California, in an amount not to exceed \$395,000,000.

(2) Construction of a community living center and renovation of domiciliary and outpatient facilities in Canandaigua, New York, in an amount not to exceed \$506,400,000.

(3) Construction of a new health care center in El Paso, Texas, in an amount not to exceed \$700,000,000.

(4) Seismic upgrade and specialty care improvements in Fort Harrison, Montana, in an amount not to exceed \$88,600,000.

(5) Realignment and closure of the Livermore campus in Livermore, California, in an amount not to exceed \$490,000,000.

(6) Construction of a new medical facility in Louisville, Kentucky, in an amount not to exceed \$1,013,000,000.

(7) Seismic retrofit and renovation, roadway and site improvements, construction of a new specialty care facility, demolition, and expansion of parking facilities in Portland, Oregon, in an amount not to exceed \$523,000,000.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2023 or the year in which funds are appropriated for the Construction, Major Projects account, \$3,716,000,000 for the projects authorized in subsection (a).

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 30.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 30. This bill would authorize VA major medical facility construction projects in California, New York, Texas, Montana, Kentucky, and Oregon.

As chairman, I have committed time and time again to provide the necessary funding that ensures our Nation's veterans receive the quality care they deserve.