

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 today in support of H.R. 1823, as amended.

This bill was introduced by my friend and colleague, Representative JACK BERGMAN. This bill will create good government accounting and reporting practices in handling of VA's multibillion-dollar budget.

General BERGMAN introduced this bill in response to a disastrous miscalculation during the Biden administration, which led to a fake budget shortfall.

Last July, VA informed Congress about a potential \$15 billion shortfall. VA said it needed the money for unprecedented increases in benefits claims and healthcare services. This notice came after the Biden administration had already submitted its VA budget request.

Mr. Speaker, it should go without saying that VA should have known its financial situation much earlier than the time they told us about the shortfall that ended up never existing.

Now, according to VA Office of Inspector General, the miscalculations stem from a lack of oversight, accuracy, and communication. It is time to change that. If there is anything that we have learned, it is that we need our eyes on the VA budget and their reviews. I am proud to support General BERGMAN's bill to do exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1823, as amended, 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 to speak in hesitant support of H.R. 1823, the VA Budget Shortfall Accountability Act of 2025, as amended.

This bill requires the U.S. Government Accountability Office to conduct a review of the circumstances surrounding the budget shortfalls at the Veterans Benefit Administration in fiscal year 2024 and at the Veterans Health Administration in fiscal year 2025.

Upon completion, GAO will submit the report to VA, which must transmit it to the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Appropriations Committees.

GAO is then required to complete five subsequent annual reviews of VHA's and VBA's budget execution for the preceding fiscal year.

I am concerned that this legislation is duplicative of reports that have already been published by VA's Office of Inspector General, and of work GAO is currently conducting that was initiated under the Comptroller General's authority.

It is especially concerning that we are considering H.R. 1823 today, given the context of the letter Chairman BOST recently sent to the Department of Justice, urging the Attorney General to investigate three former Biden

administration officials for criminal wrongdoing in handling last year's budget shortfall.

This bill should be viewed as political retaliation. It is not serious oversight. Give me a break.

The reports recently issued by OIG have already determined that VA's existing accounting and budget technological infrastructure is a primary cause of the shortcomings in VA's monitoring of budget execution that led to the VBA and VHA shortfalls in fiscal years 2024 and 2025, respectively.

This bill does nothing to address that and other underlying causes, and instead seems to be designed to reopen investigation of previous errors.

GAO's resources could be put to better use on more meaningful oversight of VA's budget formulation and execution process to include the role of the Office of Management and Budget in determining VA's annual budget requests. This legislation will not accomplish that.

While I find the intent of the bill to be retaliatory in nature in terms of the time it will waste looking back on the Biden administration budget, I do agree with my majority colleagues that the Trump administration budget formulation and execution process warrants scrutiny.

For that reason, I am pleased that the majority added a provision to the bill before markup that requires GAO to review VA's budget each year of the Trump administration. Secretary Collins has already broken the law by redirecting funds without congressional approval, and I worry that trend will continue over the next 4 years. I hope my colleagues will join me in rigorous oversight of the Trump administration's approach to VA's budget. I will not stand in the way of this bill's passage today.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN), the chief sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and the ranking member for supporting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my legislation, the VA Budget Shortfall Accountability Act, a bill that puts veterans first by ensuring the systems meant to serve them are working as intended.

Last July, the VA came to Congress with a dire warning: the agency was facing major funding shortfalls, nearly \$3 billion for veterans' benefits and additional \$12 billion for healthcare.

The message was urgent: Without immediate action, benefits could be delayed for millions of veterans. Congress acted quickly and responsibly to approve supplemental funding because when it comes to our veterans and their families, there can be no margin for error.

Their peace of mind, their financial security, and their access to care are not negotiable.

Just weeks later, we learned that there were, in fact, no shortfalls. Revised financial estimates from the VA showed billions of dollars left unspent. While the shortfall didn't actually exist, the panic, confusion, and sleepless nights for the veterans wondering whether they would receive care was very real, and it was avoidable.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of H.R. 1823 is not to assign blame. It is to strengthen trust. Our veterans should never have to worry that an accounting error might prevent them from receiving their earned care and benefits. This bill simply ensures that the Comptroller General will audit the VA's budgeting and accounting systems, identify where things went wrong, and help make sure it never happens again.

Let's be clear: The VA serves millions of veterans with dedication and compassion every day, but we can always do better and our veterans deserve nothing less. They have earned the peace of mind that comes from knowing their government is not only committed to them but equipped to serve them reliably.

The VA Budget Shortfall Accountability Act is about reinforcing that commitment. This is not a partisan issue. It is about making sure we get it right for those who have served our Nation every time.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting this bill, which will help ensure that our veterans never have to question whether their benefits and care will be there when they need them.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to share my position on this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1823, 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.

#### IMPROVING VA TRAINING FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA CLAIMS ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2201) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve claims, made under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, regarding military sexual trauma, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2201

*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 “Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act”.

**SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENT OF CLAIMS BASED ON MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

(a) TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES WHO PROCESS SUCH CLAIMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (c) of section 1166 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking “members of teams established under subsection (a) are trained” and inserting “each employee of the Department who processes such a claim, communicates with a claimant regarding evidence supporting such a claim, or decides such a claim, receives annual sensitivity training and training”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(4) The Secretary shall ensure that training received by an employee under this subsection is appropriate for how much experience the employee has with such claims.

“(5) The Secretary shall update training under this subsection not less than once annually.”

(2) REPORT.—Not later than 90 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 Senate and House of Representatives a report regarding—

(A) training provided under such subsection before such date; and

(B) plans of the Secretary to carry out the amendments made by paragraph (1).

(b) EXPANSION OF DUTY TO ASSIST IN OBTAINING RECORDS FOR A COMPENSATION CLAIM.—Section 5103A(c) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3); and

(2) by inserting, after paragraph (1), the following new paragraph (2):

“(2) In the case of a claim under section 1166 of this title, the assistance provided by the Secretary under this section shall include obtaining—

“(A) the service personnel record of the claimant; and

“(B) the service medical record of the claimant.”

(c) SENSITIVITY TRAINING FOR CERTAIN CONTRACTED HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS: REPORT; IMPROVEMENTS.—Not later than 90 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 Senate and House of Representatives a report on—

(1) sensitivity training required for health care professionals and individuals who communicate with veterans to schedule examinations, contracted under section 504 of the Veterans’ Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note), to perform examinations of veterans who make claims under section 1166 of title 38, United States Code; and

(2) the plan of the Secretary to—

(A) improve such sensitivity training; and

(B) ensure that a veteran who makes such a claim is not retraumatized during such an examination by such a contracted health care professional.

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 re-

visé and extend their remarks on H.R. 2201, as amended.

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, today, I rise in support of H.R. 2201, as amended. This bill was introduced by my friend and colleague, Representative YOUNG KIM.

This bill would require that VA claims processors and contracted disability compensation examiners undergo annual sensitivity training to prevent retraumatizing survivors of military sexual trauma who are pursuing claims for VA benefits.

The bill would also ensure that VA employees receive better training and obtain all relevant military service records so veterans can receive more accurate decisions on their military sexual trauma claims.

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Because military sexual trauma often goes unreported, a veteran’s military service records rarely prove that they experienced an MST. This bill would ensure that VA claims processors review and understand the types of evidence that can prove an MST claim.

Further, veterans relive what they suffered through during service when they file a claim based on military sexual trauma. We must ensure that every interaction VA has with them is trauma-informed.

Representative KIM’s bill would decrease the risk of retraumatizing veterans who have endured MST. Her bill would also streamline the MST claims process for them so that these veterans can more easily access their disability benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2201, as amended, 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. 2201, the Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act, as amended.

I think we can all agree that no one should ever, ever be subject to sexual violence while serving in the military. It is truly a tragedy that it happens at all, but sadly, it does.

Unfortunately, it occurs to many men and women in our military ranks at a rate likely greater than that of the general public. That means that among some of the best people our country has, there are far too many who have been violated in the most personal of ways.

Far too often, sexual assault in the military is perpetrated by those in positions of power, and far too often, these assaults are swept under the rug by the chain of command with the poor excuse that this is being done to avoid disrupting unit cohesion. This means that the victims of sexual assault are

left to serve with and under their assailants, watching them go unpunished for their crimes. This is a double indignity that no one should ever have to suffer.

Sexual trauma is unlike any other trauma. It has the ability to separate someone from their own body. It can make someone feel like they are a stranger in that body. It can make them feel unsafe in their own skin.

The effects of this trauma are heart-breaking and can be lasting. Asking victims of sexual violence to speak about it or provide physical evidence relating to it can be retraumatizing.

Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs requires that personnel managing claims of this type receive training on the subject every 5 years. That seems like a long time between training for such a sensitive subject and a unique type of concern, especially as the study and treatment of these issues evolves rapidly and new best practices are developed and implemented.

When it comes to the treatment of military sexual trauma compensation claims, I think it is worth revisiting training annually to ensure that we are giving these veterans proper care and treatment.

H.R. 2201 is an effort to add a little more care and compassion to the process of disability claims of this nature. We routinely advocate for veterans and their well-being in our committee, and this bill does just that.

By mandating that providers have more frequent and updated training, we can ensure better outcomes for the veteran. It is something we must keep pushing for. Every day, we must work to build a better veterans’ experience, and providing training more frequently can help us accomplish that goal.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2201 and to continue to press for better care for veterans.

Mr. Speaker, for the victims of sexual assault out there who may be listening right now, they should know that they are seen and heard. I will continue to push for accountability for those who perpetrated the assaults, and I will push even harder to ensure these veterans get the compassionate care that they have earned and deserve.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. KIM), the chief sponsor of this bill.

Mrs. KIM. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman BOST for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of my bill, H.R. 2201, the Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act.

Mr. Speaker, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 50 men experience military sexual trauma, or MST, as a servicemember. As many of my colleagues have already stated, a claim based on MST can be difficult to prove because MST often

goes unreported during military service.

Furthermore, evidence indicating that MST occurred is difficult to evaluate, and VA claims processors and examiners do not have sufficient training to recognize indirect evidence of MST. They are also not required to undergo annual sensitivity training to reduce the risk of retraumatizing survivors of MST.

Further, the law requires VA to help veterans filing disability benefits claims based on MST to gather evidence for their claims. However, VA does not always obtain a veteran's complete service personnel and medical records, which can provide crucial evidence to prove an MST claim.

This bipartisan bill works to improve the MST claim process by requiring VA employees working on these cases to complete annual training to better identify evidence and to ensure that veterans are not retraumatized during the examination process.

Additionally, the VA would be required to automatically obtain all service personnel and medical records for veterans filing an MST claim to ensure their cases are processed in an accurate and timely manner.

Streamlining the MST claim process and improving VA training will ensure veterans who endured MST can more easily access their earned benefits and ensure they are treated with compassion during the claims process.

I thank Representatives NIKKI BUDZINSKI, DON BACON, and CRISSY HOULAHAN for their collaboration on this commonsense, bipartisan measure that provides survivors of MST with the support and protection they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. BUDZINSKI), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Technology Modernization and my good friend.

Ms. BUDZINSKI. Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago, I was speaking in committee to celebrate the bipartisanship of this important legislation and the urgent need to pass it out of the House. Today, we are one step closer to making that a reality.

First, I thank Representative YOUNG KIM for her leadership and collaboration on this bill, and I thank our veterans for their service and bravery.

This bill is needed for so many of those veterans who have endured sexual trauma while in service. When these veterans go to file military sexual trauma claims, navigating the VA system should never add to the pain they have already endured. That is why I introduced this bipartisan legislation to ensure the VA's claims process supports rather than retraumatizes survivors of MST.

Right now, contracted disability compensation examiners are only re-

quired to complete outdated online sensitivity training before handling these deeply sensitive claims. This insufficient preparation can make the claims process retraumatizing for those who have already suffered.

MST affects veterans of all genders. While it is more common among women, many male veterans are also impacted. We must ensure that all of our survivors are treated with dignity and care.

The Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act would modernize and strengthen the training required for VA staff and contractors who work on MST claims and help cut through the red tape that too often delays justice and support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 2201, the Improving VA Training for Military Sexual Trauma Claims Act of 2025, as amended.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2201, 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.

#### AUTOMOTIVE SUPPORT SERVICES TO IMPROVE SAFE TRANSPORTATION ACT OF 2025

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1364) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide clarification regarding the inclusion of medically necessary automobile adaptations in Department of Veterans Affairs definition of "medical services", as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1364

*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 "Automotive Support Services to Improve Safe Transportation Act of 2025" or the "ASSIST Act of 2025".*

#### SEC. 2. CLARIFICATION REGARDING INCLUSION OF MEDICALLY NECESSARY AUTOMOBILE ADAPTATIONS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DEFINITION OF "MEDICAL SERVICES".

*Section 1701(6)(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:*

*"(1) The provision of any medically necessary automobile adaptations for driver or passenger use, including—*

*"(i) ramp and kneeling systems;*  
*"(ii) raised doors or lowered floors;*  
*"(iii) raised roofs;*  
*"(iv) air conditioning;*  
*"(v) occupied and unoccupied mobility lifts;*  
*"(vi) ingress or egress accessibility modifications;*  
*"(vii) wheelchair tie-downs; and*  
*"(viii) adapted seating."*

#### SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN LIMITS ON PAYMENTS OF PENSION.

*Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "November 30, 2031" and inserting "September 30, 2032".*

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 H.R. 1364, as amended.

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 today in support of H.R. 1364, as amended. The bill was introduced by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BARRETT), my friend and a fellow veteran.

H.R. 1364, as amended, would allow eligible disabled veterans to receive adaptive automobile equipment that they may need to safely operate their vehicles. Right now, there are too many restrictions on eligible items that veterans could use under this program.

Mr. BARRETT's bill would close that loophole and give disabled veterans the flexibility that they need to live independent lives. Additionally, the bill would include adaptations for driver and passenger use to get veterans where they need to be.

This Congress, the Trump administration has committed to making VA work for veterans again. This bill would cut the bureaucracy nonsense from the last administration and do just that.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the VFW, the WWP, and PVA for supporting this bill. I also thank Representative BARRETT for introducing this bill and for his work on behalf of disabled veterans across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1364, as amended, 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. 1364, the Automotive Support Services to Improve Safe Transportation Act, or ASSIST Act, of 2025, as amended.

For disabled veterans, attending a medical appointment is often not a routine drive but, rather, can be a logistical and physical challenge. That is why Representatives LEVIN and