

per capita rates than residents of most U.S. States. However, veterans in the territories have long struggled to access the VA healthcare they have earned. This legislation could help reduce the rate at which these veterans must be referred to community providers or endure lengthy travel to access services at VA medical facilities thousands and thousands of miles away from home.

Veterans deserve access to the care and benefits they have earned, regardless of where they live. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3400, the TRAVEL Act.

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 the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (Ms. KING-HINDS).

Ms. KING-HINDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, H.R. 3400, as amended, the Territorial Response and Access to Veterans Essential Lifecare Act, otherwise known as the TRAVEL Act of 2025.

This legislation is a vital step toward improving healthcare access to veterans residing in U.S. territories, including my district, the Northern Mariana Islands.

Our veterans have served our country with honor, but too many of them still struggle to receive even the most basic care close to home.

The TRAVEL Act directly addresses the critical shortage of specialized medical care in remote and underserved areas. It authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to temporarily deploy VA physicians and medical specialists to the territories. These professionals would receive travel bonuses and provide much-needed care, helping close persistent gaps in the VA service network.

When I meet with veterans back home, I often hear the same heart-breaking stories: long travel, long waits, and feeling forgotten by the very system meant to care for them. This bill is driven by those voices. Their needs, their experiences, and their dignity are at the heart of the TRAVEL Act. This bill brings care to them rather than asking them to sacrifice even more.

I extend my deep appreciation to the Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman MIKE BOST and Ranking Member TAKANO, as well as their dedicated staff, for their work and support of this legislation. This bipartisan effort reflects a shared commitment across the aisle and across the country ensuring that no veteran is left behind, no matter where they live.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support the TRAVEL Act.

□ 1620

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, once again, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 3400, the TRAVEL Act.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, 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. 3400, 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. BOST. 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.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2025

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3767) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a time frame for the employment in the Department of Veterans Affairs of participants in the Health Professionals Scholarship 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. 3767

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 "Health Professionals Scholarship Program Improvement Act of 2025" or the "HPSP Improvement Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. TIME FRAME FOR EMPLOYMENT OF PARTICIPANTS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH PROFESSIONALS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7616 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d)(1) The Secretary shall ensure that a participant in the Scholarship Program receives a contract for employment in the full-time clinical practice of such participant's profession at a Department facility with the highest need, as determined by the Secretary, by not later than 90 days after the later of the following dates:

"(A) The date on which the participant completes the course in the Scholarship Program.

"(B) The date on which participant obtains all required licensure, certification, or credentialing necessary to practice independently in their field.

"(2) A contract referred to in paragraph (1) shall include a competitive salary and benefits package consistent with the employment standards of the Department."

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter until the termination date specified in paragraph (2), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the implementation of subsection (d) of section 7616 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(2) TERMINATION DATE.—The termination date specified in this paragraph is September 30, 2027.

SEC. 3. PROHIBITION ON SMOKING IN FACILITIES OF THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.

(a) PROHIBITION.—Section 1715 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"§ 1715. Prohibition on smoking in facilities of the Veterans Health Administration

"(a) PROHIBITION.—No person (including any veteran, patient, resident, employee of the Department, contractor, or visitor) may smoke on the premises of any facility of the Veterans Health Administration.

"(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) The term 'smoke' includes—

"(A) the use of cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and any other combustion or heating of tobacco; and

"(B) the use of any electronic nicotine delivery system, including electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens, and e-cigars.

"(2) The term 'facility of the Veterans Health Administration' means any land or building (including any medical center, nursing home, domiciliary facility, outpatient clinic, or center that provides readjustment counseling) that is—

"(A) under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

"(B) under the control of the Veterans Health Administration; and

"(C) not under the control of the General Services Administration."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 1715 and inserting the following:

"1715. Prohibition on smoking in facilities of the Veterans Health Administration."

(2) CONFORMING REPEAL.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Section 526 of the Veterans Health Care Act of 1992 (Public Law 102-585; 38 U.S.C. 1715 note) is repealed.

(B) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents of such Act is amended by striking the item relating to such section.

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. 3767, 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. 3767, as amended, offered by my friend and colleague, Representative HAMADEH.

This bill would hold the VA to a deadline to hire participants in the Health Professionals Scholarship Program.

The scholarship was created to address chronic workforce shortages. Critical healthcare jobs, like nurses, physician assistants, and mental health providers, continue to be short-staffed and need good people in these roles.

Right now, VA pays for scholarship enrollees' education in return for several years of service to the VA.

Unfortunately, there have been cases where VA can take months before offering them a position. Sometimes, people in the program are forced to break the agreement because of bureaucracy delays at the VA. They seek work elsewhere just to make ends meet.

Representative HAMADEH's bill would ensure that VA is properly staffed by making VA fulfill its end of the bargain.

This bill also includes language from Representative NEAL DUNN's bill, which would prohibit smoking on VHA campuses.

Since the nineties, VA has issued policies to provide safer smoking environments. Then, in March 2019, VA issued its most recent policy for a smoke-free VHA. This bill would align law with the current VA practice.

Patients and VA employees have a right to be protected from the harmful medical effects of secondhand smoke. This bill would do just that. Many private-sector healthcare systems already have smoke-free policies.

This bill, as amended, would take important steps to improve VA healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3767, 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 support of H.R. 3767, the Health Professionals Scholarship Program Improvement Act of 2025, as amended.

For many years, the Health Professionals Scholarship Program has allowed VA to provide financial assistance to future medical professionals in return for a promise of service at VA facilities to ensure VA can meet its staffing needs. The program has had longstanding success in both ensuring prospective providers can complete their training and bolstering VA's workforce, especially in difficult-to-hire areas and for difficult-to-recruit professions.

However, some participants have expressed concerns that hiring delays at VA have prevented them from receiving their employment contracts in a timely manner. While there are many steps to onboarding new clinicians at VA, including necessary processes such as credentialing and privileging, we must make sure that VA does everything in its power to bring new staff on quickly, especially in the case of prospective providers who have proven themselves willing to serve the veteran community.

This legislation will ensure that VA provides employment contracts to graduates of the Health Professionals Scholarship Program within 90 days of completion of their programs or within 90 days of completing all necessary licensing and credentialing processes, whichever is later.

Participants in the Health Professionals Scholarship Program are dedi-

cated to service to the veteran community and are vital to ensuring VA has sufficient staffing across the Nation.

We should continue to seek additional ways to improve the hiring and onboarding process at VA, including through additional workforce investments and improving the use of expedited hiring authorities.

However, in the meantime, there is an important step in ensuring this program fulfills its purpose, both for participants and for VA's workforce needs.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAMADEH), the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. HAMADEH of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, H.R. 3767, the Health Professionals Scholarship Program Improvement Act of 2025.

As too many taxpayers well know, the VA spends millions of our hard-earned taxpayer dollars training healthcare professionals through scholarships, yet, these same qualified professionals are forced to wait months for employment contracts after graduation. All the while, our veterans suffer.

It is government inefficiency at its worst, and our veterans seem to always be paying the price. Veterans are sent to emergency rooms while skilled doctors are waiting to serve patients.

That is why I introduced this bipartisan legislation with my colleague, Congresswoman NIKKI BUDZINSKI, because we saw a program that required action. Bureaucratic red tape is the enemy.

The reports by the inspector general are a testament to what veterans in my district already know: Staffing shortfalls are more than a figure. They are missed appointments, endless long waits, and canceled procedures.

American heroes' lives are at stake. Back home in Arizona, the Phoenix VA Health Care System covers 100,000 veterans. The Southern Arizona VA Health Care System covers yet another 170,000. Every one of them deserves access to qualified providers.

Arizona's Eighth District alone has 65,000 veterans. These patients deserve better than bureaucratic incompetence when they need medical care. They did not wait to defend America, and America should not make them wait for healthcare.

My bill offers a simple and common-sense fix. HPSP scholarship recipients will be given offers of jobs within 90 days post-graduation. They will not wait. Veterans will not be forgotten. We are going to drain the VA swamp one regulation at a time.

Our bill also requires an annual report to Congress on hire dates and placement rates. Transparency generates performance.

We are not just addressing the issue today. We are ensuring bureaucrats cannot hide and escape tomorrow.

To those who would say 90 days is too aggressive, my response is: How long should a veteran wait? How long should a trained physician sit idle? The current state is intolerable. The status quo has failed, and it is time for genuine reform.

□ 1630

Mr. Speaker, I have seen firsthand what occurs when the systems fail for those on the front lines overseas. We cannot allow failure at home. When I served as an Army intelligence officer overseas, we lived by a simple creed: Mission first, and no Americans left behind.

My bill is an embodiment to that promise. This isn't partisan posturing. This is about doing right by America's warfighters. The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs agreed. They voted for my bill by voice vote without opposition. There was zero dissent. There was complete consensus and stakeholder support. It is now time for the entire House to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, every day of delay is another day a veteran waits for care. It is another day a qualified professional can't serve. It is another day the system fails those who have served and protected us all. It is another day the swamp wins and our heroes lose.

We ask our veterans to wait for many things. Quality healthcare shouldn't be one of them, not in President Trump's America and not on our watch.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support the HPSP Improvement Act. Our veterans have waited long enough. We must deliver on the promise we made to the brave men and women who served our country. It is time to put veterans first.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, once again, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 3767, the Health Professionals Scholarship Act of 2025, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, 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. 3767, 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.

HONORING OUR HEROES ACT OF 2025

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2721) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and carry out a pilot program to furnish a headstone or burial marker to veterans who died on or before November 1, 1990, and for other purposes, as amended.