

In closing, once again, I stand in strong support of this legislation, 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. 2721, 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.

## VETERANS READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM INTEGRITY ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3579) to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to the Veterans Readiness and Employment program of 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. 3579

*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 Readiness and Employment Program Integrity Act”.*

### SEC. 2. APPLICATION REQUIREMENT UNDER VETERANS READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

*Section 3106(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—*

*(1) by striking “necessary (1) to determine” and inserting “necessary to determine”;*

*(2) by striking “and (2) in the case” and inserting “and, in the case”;*

*(3) by inserting “(1)” before “The Secretary”;*

*and*

*(4) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:*

*“(2) The Secretary may not provide an initial evaluation of a veteran under paragraph (1) before the veteran submits to the Secretary an application containing the substantive work record and educational transcripts of the veteran that the Secretary determines appropriate.”.*

### SEC. 3. MAXIMUM DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE UNDER VETERANS READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

*Section 3117(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:*

*“(3)(A) Subject to subparagraph (B), a veteran may not receive assistance under this subsection for more than 365 days.*

*“(B) A veteran may receive an additional 180 days of such assistance if an individual who provides counseling under this chapter to such veteran certifies that the veteran is actively seeking employment.”.*

### SEC. 4. REPORTING AND DATA COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS UNDER VETERANS READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

*(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:*

#### “§3123. Requirements for data collection and reporting

*“(a) DATA COLLECTION.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report regarding the employment of veterans who participate in a vocational rehabilitation program under this chapter. Such information shall include, for each such veteran—*

*“(1) the regional office responsible for the provision of the program; and*

*“(2) the annual wages of the veteran before and after the completion of the program.*

*“(b) PUBLICATION OF WAIT TIMES.—On an annual basis, the Secretary shall make publicly available, on an appropriate website of the Department, the average time between the date on which a veteran requests a vocational rehabilitation program under this chapter and the date on which the veteran first meets with a counselor as part of the veteran’s program.”.*

*(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:*

*“3123. Requirements for data collection and reporting.”.*

*(c) INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF PROGRAM.—*

*(1) REVIEW REQUIRED.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall seek to enter into a contract, with a non-Department entity that has expertise in vocational rehabilitation, pursuant to which the entity shall conduct a review of rehabilitation programs (as such term is defined in section 3101 of such title) under such chapter.*

*(2) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of such a contract, the entity shall submit to the Secretary a report containing recommendations regarding how to improve and modernize such rehabilitation programs.*

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 have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3579, 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. 3579 offered by my friend and colleague, Representative CISCOMANI of Arizona. This bill would make needed modernizations to the VA’s Veterans Readiness and Employment program, the VR&E program.

Over the last 2 years, our committee has uncovered disastrous wait times, fraud, waste, and abuse in the VA’s VR&E program. This bill would steer the ship in the right direction by establishing more oversight of the program.

It is the duty of Congress to make sure that veterans who complete this

workforce program are earning more and are in a better spot than they were before entering the program. VR&E currently does not track those results.

At a recent hearing, VA told the committee that 45 percent of veterans who successfully complete the program reenter it later. This does not show that the program is working for veterans. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it shows that the VR&E needs an overhaul. It is time to reform VR&E so that veterans can receive the training they need to find a meaningful career field that is fit for them.

This bill would also implement better practices for transparency on wait times to allow veterans to better plan for their future.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, Representative CISCOMANI, for sponsoring this bill to improve job training access for veterans. My committee will continue to seek ways to level the playing field for veterans seeking employment so that every veteran has access to the opportunity they want all the while protecting the taxpayers’ investment in these programs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3579, 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 express my support for H.R. 3579, as amended, the Veterans Readiness and Employment Program Integrity Act.

The VA Veteran Readiness and Employment program, otherwise known as VR&E, is also known as Chapter 31. It is a comprehensive benefits program designed to help veterans with service-connected disabilities find and maintain suitable employment. It offers personalized assistance, including career counseling, vocational training, and educational support to help veterans overcome employment barriers.

The program’s ultimate goal is to empower disabled veterans to achieve independence and a successful career in the civilian workforce.

I take great pride in my work on the Honoring our PACT Act that resulted in hundreds of thousands of veterans finally having their disability recognized, making them eligible for the VR&E program. However, that massive influx of new applicants has brought to light improvements that are needed for the VR&E program.

This legislation seeks to add some good-governance steps to the program, to make sure veterans are aware of how the benefit works upon sign up and ensures that veterans are actively seeking employment as they are prepared to exit the VR&E program.

This legislation also includes data reporting for Congress and veterans so wait times and wage data are public.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues in the House, and Senate as well, to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from the great State of Arizona (Mr. CISCOMANI).

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 3579, the Veterans Readiness and Employment Program Integrity Act. This bipartisan bill ensures that veterans have the tools and resources they need to successfully transition to civilian life.

This legislation does so by providing much-needed oversight over the VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment program, which offers specific job training and counseling to veterans with a service-connected disability. This bill requires the VA to track employment outcomes and wait times for participants in order for us to know if this program is fulfilling its core mission, and it enables better evaluation of all tracks in the VR&E so that we can do a better job in understanding what is working and also what is not working.

Far too many veterans wait for months just to meet with a program counselor. I have heard this over and over again in my district. Far too many leave programs without confidence that they have the skills to have a stable civilian career. This bill fixes that.

It is not about giveaways, it is about getting return on our investment in veterans, in dignity, in opportunity, in real jobs. It is about ensuring our veterans transition with the resources that they need, not just to survive, but to thrive.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote in support of H.R. 3579. Stand behind our veterans not just with words but with this important oversight, with accountability, and especially with action.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK), who serves on our Subcommittee on Health and our Technology Modernization Subcommittee.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to co-lead H.R. 3579 the Veterans Readiness and Employment Program Integrity Act alongside Congressman CISCOMANI.

This bipartisan bill expands economic opportunities for our veterans and brings much-needed transparency for the Veterans Readiness and Employment Program which helps veterans with service-connected disabilities transition to civilian careers.

Serving over 125,000 veterans each year, the VR&E program is critical, especially for veterans in Florida and nationwide, helping them gain the skills and opportunities needed to build successful and dignified lives after service.

To ensure veterans receive the support they deserve, the Department of Veterans Affairs must provide timely and accurate data on program outcomes. Veterans should not have to endure excessive wait times before ac-

cessing their critical services. This requires the VA to report on employment rates, wages, and average wait times, guaranteeing that veterans receive prompt and effective assistance.

These measures will improve program effectiveness and ensure veterans benefit from high quality and timely support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I encourage the Senate to act quickly.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 3579, as amended, the Veterans Readiness and Employment Program Integrity Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas). 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. 3579, 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.

□ 1650

#### RURAL VETERANS' IMPROVED ACCESS TO BENEFITS ACT OF 2025

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3951) to amend the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 and the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 to improve the temporary licensure requirements for contract health care professionals who perform medical disability examinations for 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. 3951

*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 "Rural Veterans' Improved Access to Benefits Act of 2025".

#### SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENTS TO TEMPORARY LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTRACT HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS WHO PERFORM MEDICAL DISABILITY EXAMINATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) EXPANSION.—Section 504 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note), as amended by paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of section 2002 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law

116-315; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note), is further amended, subject to the sunset in paragraph (4) of such subsection, by striking paragraph (2) of subsection (c) and inserting the following:

"(2) HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL DESCRIBED.—A health care professional described in this paragraph is a person who is eligible for appointment to a position in the Veterans Health Administration covered by section 7402(b) of title 38, United States Code, who—

"(A) has a current and unrestricted license to practice the health care profession of the health care professional;

"(B) is not barred from practicing such health care profession in any State; and

"(C) is performing authorized duties for the Department pursuant to a contract entered into under subsection (a)."

(b) DELAYED SUNSET OF AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (4) of subsection (a) of section 2002 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note) is amended by striking "On the date that is five years after the date of the enactment of this Act" and inserting "On September 30, 2031".

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (2) of such subsection is amended by striking "physicians assistants, nurse practitioners, audiologists, and psychologists" and inserting "health care professionals".

(d) REPORT.—Not later than 15 months 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 the use of the authority under section 504 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note), as temporarily amended by section 2002(a)(1) of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note) and this section. Such report shall include, with respect to the one-year period after the date of the enactment of this Act, the following elements:

(1) The number of examinations conducted pursuant to a contract under such authority.

(2) The cost, timeliness, and legal adequacy of such examinations, disaggregated by—

(A) health care professional; and

(B) contract.

(3) The number of such examinations conducted in each State, the District of Columbia, or a Commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States.

(4) The numbers of each kind of health care professionals who conducted such examinations.

(5) The number of examinations that were erroneously conducted by a health care professional—

(A) without such a contract; or

(B) unauthorized to enter into such a contract.

(6) The plan of the Secretary to correct errors in the use of such authority.

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. 3951, as amended.