

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.

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. 3951, introduced by my colleague Representative CISCOMANI from Arizona.

This bill would extend the license portability authority for contracted medical professionals conducting compensation and pension examinations for veterans until 2031. These exams are a vitally important part of going through the VA benefits process.

Veterans living in rural or underserved areas often need to travel far distances for their exams. Veterans in my district know this hurdle firsthand and the impact it can have on dragging out the timeline for them to receive their disability benefits.

Congress created the authority to expand the net for qualified, contracted medical professionals. By ensuring more contracted medical professionals can perform these exams, veterans would have greater access to their benefits closer to home.

Under current law, license portability only applies to physician assistants, nurse practitioners, audiologists, and psychologists. This bill would expand that authority to include even more providers who are eligible for employment at the VA to perform medical disability examinations. This is a necessary expansion to the VA's exam programs to get even more qualified people serving veterans.

I thank Representative CISCOMANI for his leadership on this bill and his efforts to increase access to disability benefits for our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 3951, 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. 3951, the Rural Veterans' Improved Access to Benefits Act of 2025, as amended.

There are few things we on both sides of the aisle agree on completely, and I am happy to report this bill highlights one of them.

Veterans in rural areas deserve the same access to care that someone living near a VA facility in a large city does. Rural populations are particularly vulnerable because of unreasonable travel distances for appointments, especially specialists.

For some veterans, this can be a reason to delay or forgo routine exams or care, later resulting in poorer health outcomes. We hear many stories of veterans who have appointments scheduled hours away, requiring them to secure transportation, which can often be difficult. We have also heard incredibly frustrating stories of these same appointments being canceled or rescheduled at the last minute.

What does that mean for our veterans and their families? It can mean

rescheduling childcare, leave, work, transportation, as well as other appointments they may have grouped together for ease and convenience. It also means that any follow-up appointments begin the cumbersome cycle all over again.

We should not tolerate rural veterans being treated as secondary purely because of their location. They should have the same access to care that other veterans have in more densely populated areas.

The Rural Veterans' Improved Access to Benefits Act attempts to rectify part of this problem by expanding license portability, allowing practitioners to perform exams for veterans across State lines.

At a time when medical professionals in many specializations are particularly difficult to access at the VA, it is vital that we ease access to these practitioners where possible.

This bill mandates a report regarding the number of exams completed through this license portability agreement. This data will surely prove beneficial in highlighting communities with greater needs for care.

We will continue to work to ensure all veterans get access to the care they need, whether it be through legislative levers like this or continued efforts of outreach and advocacy.

I am thankful to all of those who worked on this effort to ensure that no one is left behind. I support this bill and urge my colleagues to do the same.

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 Arizona (Mr. CISCOMANI), the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 3951, the Rural Veterans' Improved Access to Benefits Act of 2025.

This bipartisan bill aims to ensure rural veterans have access to quality and timely physician examinations so that they are able to receive the care they are entitled to, regardless of where they live.

This legislation does this by permanently allowing VA providers to perform cross-State disability exams and expanding the pool of providers who can perform medical disability examinations for the VA to include all licensed healthcare professionals.

These changes will help to address the shortage of qualified examiners in rural areas, specifically thereby reducing wait times and increasing the timely release of benefits to our veterans.

I have witnessed firsthand the challenges rural veterans in Arizona's Sixth Congressional District face in getting their medical exams completed in a timely manner.

This bill takes an essential first step toward eliminating these regional healthcare disparities and ensures that all veterans receive the quality care they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all my colleagues to vote in support of H.R. 3951.

We owe it to our servicemen and -women to make this commitment to timely healthcare access.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 3951, the Rural Veterans' Improved Access to Benefits 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. 3951, 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.

#### MODERNIZING ALL VETERANS AND SURVIVORS CLAIMS PROCESSING ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3854) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit a plan to expand the use of certain automation tools in 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. 3854

*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 "Modernizing All Veterans and Survivors Claims Processing Act".

#### SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT ON CAUSES OF DEATH AMONG VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

##### "§ 534. Annual report on causes of death among veterans

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate an annual report that contains data and information on causes of death among veterans.

"(b) ELEMENTS.—Such report shall include—

"(1) for each veteran that died during the period covered by the report an identification of—

"(A) whether such veteran had a service-connected disability rated as total;

"(B) the primary cause of death;

"(C) the secondary cause of death, if applicable; and

"(D) the manner of death;

"(2) for each primary cause of death identified pursuant to paragraph (1), a statement of the total number of veterans that died from such primary cause of death during the period covered by the report; and

"(3) for each manner of death identified pursuant to paragraph (1), a statement of the