

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. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3481, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3481, as amended, offered by my friend and colleague, Representative TOM BARRETT from Michigan.

This bill would allow veterans to opt in to receive messages digitally regarding the GI Bill education benefit.

Under current law, veterans in education programs can only receive time-sensitive information from VA through the mail. The outdated practice forces veterans to wait weeks for information they could receive in minutes through a text message.

Further, this bill would modernize VA's Solid Start program by authorizing it to communicate with veterans via text message. Right now, VA is only able to reach out to veterans in Solid Start by calling them. While the older generation of veterans pick up the phone, the VA Solid Start program has seen a concerning drop-off among younger veterans. This bill would bridge the gap in communication.

Madam Speaker, I thank Representative BARRETT for championing this bill and for finding solutions in the technology space to ensure student veterans and transitioning servicemembers are receiving up-to-date and timely information.

Madam Speaker, this bill is in lock-step with the Republican majority's efforts to properly propel VA to meet veterans where they are.

Madam Speaker, I also thank Representative VAN ORDEN for his continued efforts to make necessary improvements to the Transition Assistance Program, or the TAP program.

Under my leadership, my committee will continue to honor its commitment to all veterans, ensuring the VA is working for our veterans.

Madam Speaker, I also give special thanks to The American Legion, the PVA, and the VFW for their support.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3481, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to express my support for H.R. 3481, the Delivering Digitally to Our Veterans Act of 2025, as amended.

Veterans should not have to fight to get information about their earned GI Bill benefits, and this legislation looks to ease access to information from the VA to veterans by allowing the Department of Veterans Affairs to do outreach using digital messaging, such as text messages, direct messages, and virtual chat, in addition to direct mail.

VA is already doing much of this, but H.R. 3481, as amended, looks to codify these efforts into law to ensure they are available to veterans in the future.

H.R. 3481, as amended, also includes the text of H.R. 3386, the Streamlining the Solid Start Communications Act. Then-Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin and Senator HASSAN permanently authorized the Solid Start program, which has been a critical outreach to newly separated veterans. Solid Start allows VA to stay connected with veterans as they navigate their transition to civilian life.

H.R. 3481, as amended, expands VA Solid Start outreach efforts to include the same texts and digital options included in the underlying text.

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

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BARRETT), who is the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. BARRETT. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3481, the Delivering Digitally to Our Veterans Act.

This important legislation is a bipartisan effort to finally bring the VA into the 21st century by changing the way veterans are notified about their benefits.

Right now, under current statute, veterans across America are left digging through the mail, often intermixed with junk mail and other notices that they may receive, just to find important updates from the VA, which often leads to things getting lost and delays in their benefits.

In fact, it was not that long ago when I was in college and required to manually call in to a hotline for the VA every month to notify them that I was still a student enrolled in courses to receive my GI Bill benefits.

H.R. 3481 fixes these issues by authorizing the VA to send GI Bill and Solid Start updates to veterans digitally through their devices that so many of us carry around every single day.

This is an opt-in program that doesn't obligate any veteran to do this, but it is an easy and effective solution that will help veterans take advantage of the benefits they need when transitioning back into their communities after service.

As the chairman said, this is also supported by The American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America because they understand the importance of what we are trying to do in this legislation.

By updating the way the VA communicates, we are guaranteeing veterans receive convenient and timely updates wherever they are, on their computer, phone, or tablet. Like so many students, they may live remotely from their home address, which would prevent them from receiving these updates.

It will also reduce postage costs, allowing the VA to spend money in ways that better serve our Nation's heroes. It is a win-win overall.

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues, Mr. VAN ORDEN and Mr. TRAN, for their help in introducing this bill as we continue to work to improve the lives of veterans everywhere.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

□ 1740

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 3481, the Delivering Digitally to Our Veterans Act, as amended.

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

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

Madam 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. 3481, 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. Madam Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

VA HOSPITAL INVENTORY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3494) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out an information technology system and prioritize certain requirements to manage supply chains for medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3494

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 "VA Hospital Inventory Management System Authorization Act".

SEC. 2. MANAGEMENT OF SUPPLY CHAINS FOR MEDICAL FACILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs is authorized to—

(1) purchase or develop for the Veterans Health Administration a cloud-based information technology system for the management of inventory, including expendable and nonexpendable items; and

(2) implement such system.

(b) PILOT.—If the Secretary purchases or develops a system under subsection (a), the Secretary shall carry out a pilot program at one Veterans Health Administration facility before implementing the system throughout the Veterans Health Administration. The pilot program shall be designed to determine whether the functions of the system are satisfactory.

(c) DEADLINE.—If the Secretary purchases or develops a system under subsection (a), the Secretary shall complete the implementation of the system by not later than three years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may not exercise the authority under subsection (a) or subsection (b) until the date on which the Secretary submits to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report that includes—

(1) a comprehensive supply chain strategy to guide enterprise-wide implementation, as recommended in the report of the Comptroller General of the United States titled "VA Acquisition Management: Comprehensive Supply Chain Management Strategy Key to Address Existing Challenges" (GAO-21-445T; published March 24, 2021), which includes success metrics, a plan for data standardization, and staffing models;

(2) a cost estimate and implementation schedule for the supply chain modernization program of the Department;

(3) a comprehensive staffing assessment of the supply chain and information technology modernization workforces of the Department that includes—

(A) monthly staffing gains and losses since October 1, 2022;

(B) the current staffing level of each such workforce as of the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(C) an estimate of future staffing requirements for the implementation of the supply chain modernization program, disaggregated by each such workforce; and

(4) an independent assessment of the review carried out by the Secretary with respect to failures of the supply chain modernization program of the Department.

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 "December 31, 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. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3494, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3494, as amended, offered by Representative KIGGANS. This bill would ensure VA finally has a reliable system to track hospital supplies and equipment.

For too long, an unreliable system has wasted taxpayer dollars and left doctors and nurses searching for basic tools they need to care for our veterans. That kind of mismanagement is unacceptable. Veterans should never face delays in treatment because a hospital can't find the supplies and equipment it needs.

A modern supply chain means stronger care for our veterans, smarter spending for taxpayers, and greater accountability at the VA. It means no excuses, no wasted dollars, and no veterans left waiting because the system failed them. That is exactly what this bill delivers for our Nation's heroes.

I thank Representative KIGGANS for her continued leadership on the committee and her tireless commitment to solving this problem at the VA. I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 3494, as amended.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in cautious—I emphasize cautious—support for H.R. 3494, the VA Hospital Inventory Management System Authorization Act, as amended.

Throughout my time on this committee, I have seen the importance and necessity of an accessible and efficient supply chain system. Without these tools, hospitals remain ill-equipped to handle demand.

This became painfully evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when VA facilities were forced to use Excel spreadsheets to report PPE inventory up to the central office.

VA patients and providers deserve a modernized supply chain, and it has yet to be proven that VA has the capacity to provide this solution. I emphasize this has occurred, regardless of which party was in charge of the department.

After a canceled procurement effort last year, VA has told us that it plans to restart its supply chain modernization effort for a fifth time. As far as I can tell, they have not done much of the work needed to avoid making the same expensive mistakes again.

Representative KIGGANS' bill in its introduced form would have authorized tens of millions of dollars to VA for a pilot on a program VA does not even yet have a plan for. That is millions of dollars to the Department simply with the hope that VA was ready to get it right this time.

However, I am glad my Republican colleagues chose to incorporate critical accountability measures initially proposed by my colleague, Representative NIKKI BUDZINSKI, for consideration on the floor today after these measures

were voted down on party lines in our most recent committee markup.

With the help of committee Democrats, this bill will now ensure that the Department has critical measures in place before it embarks on implementing the untested and unproven pilot program this bill authorizes.

Representative BUDZINSKI's input requires that VA develop a comprehensive strategy for its supply chain program, a cost estimate and implementation schedule, reports on VA's internal staffing levels after support workforces were heavily depleted by the Deferred Resignation Program and other attrition, and an assessment of its recent failures in this modernization effort.

These updates represent just the most basic levels of oversight and planning that VA should have done once it decided to restart this modernization effort. I am glad my Republican colleagues are joining us in pushing for the Department to conduct these necessary assessments and plans before overhauling such an important program as supply chain management.

I also applaud Representative BUDZINSKI for inserting these commonsense checks into this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, the VA Hospital Inventory Management System Authorization Act.

As a Navy veteran, a nurse practitioner, and the proud Representative of a district that is home to more than 78,000 veterans, I know how essential it is to ensure our veteran health system works efficiently and effectively.

Unfortunately, outdated systems and fragmented logistics have created real obstacles within the VA. These failures aren't just technical. They are personal. They affect real people and real families.

Over the past several years, millions of dollars in medical equipment have gone missing from VA facilities across the country. These are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of a broader issue, one where a lack of modern infrastructure has led to waste, delay, and avoidable gaps in care.

That is why I introduced this bipartisan and commonsense approach to improving how the VA manages medical supplies. This bill authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop or acquire a cloud-based inventory management system to help ensure VA clinicians always have the right tools at the right time to provide high-quality care.

This system will offer better tracking, better forecasting, and better accountability. We are not reinventing the wheel. We are simply asking the VA to adopt the same kinds of tools

and best practices that are already being used in the private sector and to do so in a way that is transparent, results-driven, and veteran-focused.

The benefits are clear. A modern inventory management system will reduce waste, prevent delays in care, and ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently. Most importantly, it will help restore trust in a system that too often leaves veterans feeling frustrated and forgotten.

Madam Speaker, I respectfully urge my colleagues to support this bill and join me in making a practical, bipartisan improvement to the care our veterans receive.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in voting "yes" on H.R. 3494, the VA Hospital Inventory Management System Act, as amended.

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

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

Madam 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. 3494, 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.

□ 1750

FOCUSED ASSISTANCE AND SKILLS TRAINING FOR VET- ERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITION SUCCESS ACT

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4446) to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the conditions under which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is required to redevelop the individualized vocational rehabilitation plan for a veteran, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4446

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 "Focused Assistance and Skills Training for Veterans' Employment and Transition Success Act" or the "FAST VETS Act".

SEC. 2. CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SHALL REDEVELOP INDIVIDUALIZED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PLAN.

Section 3107 of title 38, United States Code, is amended in subsection (b)—

(1) by striking "The Secretary shall review" and inserting "(1) The Secretary shall review";

(2) by striking the second sentence; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(2) On the basis of such review, the Secretary shall—

"(A) redevelop such plan with such veteran if the Secretary determines the achievement of the long-range rehabilitation goals for such veteran is—

"(i) no longer feasible due to changes in the employment handicap of the veteran; and

"(ii) likelier under a different plan formulated under subsection (a); or

"(B) disapprove redevelopment of such plan if the Secretary determines such redevelopment is not appropriate.".

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. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4446.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4446 offered by my colleague, Representative MAXINE DEXTER, from Oregon.

H.R. 4446 would allow a veteran who has changed in their disability rating to apply for changes in their Veterans Readiness and Employment, or the VR&E plan, instead of being forced to complete their current rehabilitation plan first.

This bill is a simple fix that would remove the outdated practice that requires disabled veterans to complete their current plan before switching to a plan that may better fit the changes in their disability.

During the Biden Administration, VA damaged their relationship with veterans in the VR&E program. Under President Trump's Secretary Collins' leadership, VA is rebuilding that trust and is working to fix the program.

This Congress, the Republican majority has worked hard to improve VR&E by modernizing the program, increasing transparency, and introducing accountability to both the VA and the veterans. While this bill is a step in the right direction, I hope my colleagues recognize that there is much more work to be done to get VA to work for the veterans first.

Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 4446, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to express my support for H.R. 4446, the Focused Assistance and Skills Training for Veterans' Employment and Transition Success, or FAST VETS Act. Introduced by Veterans' Affairs Committee member Representative DEXTER, the

VA Veterans Readiness and Employment, or VR&E program, is perhaps the greatest resource disabled veterans have to seek a new career path, but veterans are dealing with historic wait times due to program popularity and expanded eligibility under the PACT Act.

I respectfully disagree with how the chairman has framed the VR&E program and its shortcomings, but let me just proceed to the virtues of this bill.

The program is incredibly important for disabled veterans because it provides a comprehensive, individualized pathway to overcome employment barriers caused by service-connected disabilities, but with wait times weeks, or even months in some areas of the country, veterans risk missing out on the program's benefits.

Representative DEXTER's bill would make it easier for veterans to find employment while in the program and to graduate faster from the program, freeing up counselors at VA to assist the next class of disabled veterans seeking a new career.

One of the primary goals of the PACT Act was to recognize the sacrifice of so many more veterans who were injured during their time serving our Nation and to make them eligible for many of the programs offered to help them find meaningful employment such as VR&E. Now the VR&E program must keep pace with this new influx of veterans and ensure that it is meeting their needs.

I thank Representative DEXTER for her work on this bill, and I know she is already at work on additional solutions for the program, such as measures to maintain and support the staff at VA tasked with carrying out the program.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues in the House and Senate as well to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. DEXTER), who is the author of H.R. 4446 and who serves on our Health Subcommittee and our Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee.

Ms. DEXTER. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their words of support today for the FAST VETS Act.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak in strong support of the FAST VETS Act, Focused Assistance and Skills Training for Veterans' Employment and Transition Success, or FAST VETS Act.

I am grateful to Representatives MESSMER, MCGARVEY, and VAN ORDEN for joining me in this bipartisan effort to better serve our Nation's veterans.

Like many physicians, I trained at the VA where the sign on the door said: The price of freedom is visible here. Our veterans gave everything for this country. Our promise in return is that they will not just get by in civilian life, they will thrive.

Congress must ensure employment readiness programs truly work for veterans, and that is exactly what the