

and his great work. He told me that I did pronounce "Murphysboro" right, so we are off to a good start. I hope everyone votes for it.

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 Ohio (Mr. JORDAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 988.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1650

VETERANS READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2025

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 980) to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to the provision of on-campus educational and vocational counseling by 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. 980

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 Improvement Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. ELIMINATION OF REQUIREMENT THAT ON-CAMPUS EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL COUNSELING IS PROVIDED BY CERTAIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES.

Section 3697B(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking the second sentence.

SEC. 3. AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO APPROVE NON-DEGREE FLIGHT TRAINING COURSES AS PART OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3104(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting "(1)" before "A rehabilitation program";

(2) by striking "To the maximum extent practicable" and inserting "Except as provided under paragraph (2), to the maximum extent practicable"; and

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

"(2) Notwithstanding section 3680A(b) of this title, the Secretary may approve a rehabilitation program for a veteran under this chapter that includes the pursuit of a course of flight training other than one given by an educational institution of higher learning for credit toward a standard college degree the veteran is seeking."

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to a rehabilitation program approved on or after August 1, 2026.

SEC. 4. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TRAINING AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES: OUTREACH REQUIREMENT; EXTENSIONS.

(a) VRE CONTACT INFORMATION.—Section 3104 of title 38, United States Code, is amend-

ed by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(f) The Secretary shall establish a dedicated telephone number within the Education Call Center of the Department for calls about services provided under this chapter. Each regional office of the Department shall include, on the website of the regional office, a name, telephone number, and email address, through which veterans may receive information about services provided under this chapter."

(b) REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIONS OF PROGRAMS: TIMELY CONSIDERATION; REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3105 of title 38, United States Code, is amended, in subsection (c)—

(A) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively;

(B) by inserting "(1)" before "The Secretary"; and

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

"(2) The Secretary shall approve or deny a request for an extension under paragraph (1) not later than 30 days after the date on which the veteran submits such request."

(2) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for five years, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives an annual report on requests for extensions under such subsection (c). Each such report shall include, for the year preceding the date of the report—

(A) the number of veterans who requested such an extension;

(B) the number of such requests that were approved; and

(C) the number of such requests that were denied.

SEC. 5. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN LIMITS ON PAYMENTS OF PENSION.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "January 31, 2033" and inserting "July 31, 2033".

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. 980, 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. 980, as amended, offered by my friend and colleague, Representative DERRICK VAN ORDEN of Wisconsin.

This bill would make improvements to the VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment, or VR&E, program.

Over the last 2 years, my committee has uncovered disastrous wait times, fraud, waste, and abuse in the VA VR&E program. This bill would move the program in the right direction by providing more transparency on these failures.

Mr. Speaker, it is our duty to make sure that veterans who complete this

workforce program are earning more and are better off than they were before entering the program.

VR&E currently does not track those results. In fact, the only thing VR&E does track is the 45 percent of veterans who have completed programs and simply reentered them later. There remains continued fraud, waste, and abuse in the VR&E program, and the return on investment for the veterans is unknown.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, it shows me that VR&E needs an overhaul. This bill would reduce the bureaucracy and red tape that the VA has used in the past and would modernize the requirements for the VetSuccess on Campus officers, or VSOCs, by removing the master's degree requirement to a bachelor's degree in the relevant field of study.

This bill would also include increasing oversight and transparency of the VR&E program by implementing a call center specifically for the VR&E program. For VR&E to work well, there must be transparency to veterans who are using the program.

Finally, this bill would also allow veterans in the VR&E program to pursue noncollege degrees, like flight training.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a step in the right direction of putting veterans first at the VA. I thank my friend and colleague, Representative VAN ORDEN, for sponsoring this bill to improve the VR&E program.

I also thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAMADEH) and the gentleman from California (Mr. OBERNOLTE) for championing the other provisions of this language.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 980, 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. 980, the Veterans Readiness and Employment Improvement Act of 2025, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will remove the requirement that Veteran Readiness and Employment, or VR&E, counselors staff the VetSuccess on Campus, or VSOC, program. This change will put counselors back into the severely understaffed VR&E program and will also allow the future expansion of the VSOC program, which has been limited by the availability of VR&E counselors.

Mr. Speaker, many colleges and universities and Members of Congress are asking for VSOC staff on their campuses and in their district because they have seen firsthand the impact a VSOC can have. By expanding who can fill that role, we will give more student veterans access to the program and help enable them to access their earned benefits.

While I do have concerns that section 4 of the bill requires VA to adjudicate extension requests within 30 days without addressing the underlying issue of

staffing, I support the intent of timely decisions for our student veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I do encourage all of my colleagues to join me in supporting passage of this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. VAN ORDEN), who is the chief sponsor of the bill.

Mr. VAN ORDEN. Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, it has been a great privilege to get important bills like H.R. 913, the SAFE Veterans Act of 2025, and H.R. 1793, the Veterans Readiness and Employment Transparency Act of 2025, over the finish line.

I thank my friends, the gentleman from California (Mr. OBERNOLTE) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. HAMADEH), for their work alongside me to modernize the Veteran Readiness and Employment process. I also thank the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and our Democratic colleagues for understanding the importance of this program.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good VA education and job training program. It works, but we have to continue to improve it.

Veterans currently have to wait up to 7 months to complete the VR&E program intake and processing procedures. My bill, H.R. 980, the Veterans Readiness and Employment Improvement Act, would update the requirements for the VA's VetSuccess on Campus officers, or VSOCs, by closing an unnecessary loophole that right now requires a master's degree to qualify for these positions.

By closing this loophole and allowing VSOCs to serve more student veterans on campus by simply requiring a bachelor's degree in the relevant field of study will get these positions filled with solid candidates who are able to serve veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that our Republican Conference continues to address these issues to cut through the red tape and the bureaucracy of the VA and focus on the veterans themselves and, with that, making the entire government better. Removing the bureaucratic barrier and allowing more veterans to be served on college campuses across the country is in lockstep with that mission.

This bill would also establish a VR&E hotline that would allow veterans to call and receive correct information without having to sit on hold at a call center that may or may not be able to answer their questions.

Student veterans across this country have asked for these improvements, and I am happy to report that we hear our veterans, and we are making the changes that will make their lives better.

There also continues to be a pilot shortage, and this bill would allow veterans to help fill these critical gaps by allowing veterans to use their VR&E benefits to attend flight school.

As a disabled veteran, I am proud to lead this legislation on behalf of our veteran community.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support H.R. 980, as amended.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. OBERNOLTE), who has done a tremendous amount of work to help with this bill.

Mr. OBERNOLTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 980.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and my friend and colleague from Wisconsin (Mr. VAN ORDEN) for including my bill, H.R. 913, the Streamlining Aviation for Eligible Veterans Act, in the text of this bill.

This bill will make meaningful improvements to the way that the VR&E program serves our disabled veterans, and my section of the bill will enable those veterans to use their VR&E benefits to pursue vocational flight training.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we have a nationwide pilot shortage, and our veterans make excellent candidates for pilots, having been trained in a highly technical environment and being trained to follow the rules and being able to absorb all of the knowledge necessary to be an exceptional pilot.

Mr. Speaker, there currently are impediments for VR&E benefits being used in vocational flight training. These benefits are intended, as currently written, to be used in programs that are degree granting. As we all know, earning a college degree has nothing to do necessarily with learning how to fly an aircraft.

This bill will improve that section by granting the VA the flexibility to have veterans pursue vocational flight training outside of degree-granting programs.

Mr. Speaker, that will not only incentivize our servicemen and -women to become pilots and to embark on new careers, but it will also help to solve the nationwide pilot shortage in our country. Most importantly, it puts our veterans first.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 980.

□ 1700

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I have no more speakers. I am ready to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see that the House is moving this bill forward today, and I hope for speedy passage through the Senate and to the President to be signed into law.

I look at the many other good bills languishing in committee waiting for us to take them up and move them to the floor like this one. If we are to believe our own rhetoric, it shouldn't matter if a good idea is from a Repub-

lican Member or a Democratic Member. If it helps veterans, we should get it done.

I hope to see the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs move bills other than the ones sponsored by his members expected to be in tight reelection races. I hope he returns to the traditional practice of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs moving both Republican and Democratic bills in great numbers. I see the smile across his nice countenance, which to me is a sign of his assent and his geniality.

I encourage my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 980, the Veterans Readiness and Employment Improvement Act of 2025, as amended, and I encourage my colleagues to vote for it. I hope very much that my chairman will move other bills, as well.

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

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, oh, how I missed my colleagues last week.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BICE). 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. 980, 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, 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.

ERNEST PELTZ ACCRUED VETERANS BENEFITS ACT

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3123) to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to laws relating to the payment of certain benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs that are affected by death, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3123

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 "Ernest Peltz Accrued Veterans Benefits Act".

SEC. 2. PAYMENT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF PENSION AFTER DEATH OF A VETERAN IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 51 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting, after section 5121A, the following new section: