

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:

**§ 5121B. Payment of pension after death of a veteran in certain circumstances**

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), if the Secretary issues a decision awarding entitlement to a pension to a veteran before the death of such veteran, and the Secretary issues payment of such pension after the veteran dies, such pension that was due and unpaid at the time of the veteran's death shall be paid to the first living person or entity listed below:

“(1) The veteran's spouse.

“(2) The veteran's children (in equal shares).

“(3) The veteran's dependent parents (in equal shares).

“(4) The estate of the deceased veteran unless the estate will escheat.

“(b) LIMITATION.—In a case described in subsection (a), if no application is filed under section 5121 of this title during the one-year period following the death of the veteran, the pension described in such subsection shall be paid to the estate of the deceased veteran unless the estate will escheat.”.

**(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—**

(1) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 5121(a) of such title is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by inserting “section 5121B of this title, or” before “sections 3329 and 3330”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting, after the item relating to section 5121A, the following new item: “5121B. Payment of pension after death of a veteran in certain circumstances.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to the death of a veteran that occurs on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

**SEC. 3. 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 “February 28, 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. 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. 3123, 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. 3123, as amended, offered by my colleague Representative ELISE STEFANIK of New York.

This bill would require VA to pay out a due and unpaid pension to a veteran's next of kin in cases where the VA issues a decision granting a claim for a pension to a veteran, but the veteran passed away before VA had issued the first payment.

In the rare circumstances where an elderly veteran dies in the period between their VA pension being approved and receipt of their first payment, a

surviving family should be able to rely on those funds as a source of support to honor their veteran's legacy.

Veterans eligible for the VA pension must be at least 65 years old and meet the annual net worth limit.

A great portion of eligible veterans served in the Korean war, Vietnam war, and Gulf war. This legislation would close the loophole and prevent VA bureaucracy from being forced to take back benefits delivered to the veteran who earned it through their service.

Families grieving a veteran's passing should not have to worry that VA will go after them to recover a pension payment.

This legislation would prevent those situations while recognizing our commitment to honor those who have served this country.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3123, 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. 3123, the Ernest Peltz Accrued Veterans Benefits Act, as amended.

It is no secret that our offices get a lot of calls about casework on veterans' benefits. Sometimes these calls are a simple matter of getting people the right point of contact in the right office. Sometimes it is an ask to wake a sleepy bureaucracy to move faster on behalf of a constituent. Sometimes these calls highlight a loophole or a blind spot in the law that has been discovered because deserving beneficiaries have been wronged or overlooked.

It is imperative in those instances that we as Members of Congress work to fix those problems on behalf of those who elected us to this body.

That is the case with the Peltz family. Upon the death of Mr. Ernest Peltz, VA failed to pay the benefits he earned when his death occurred shortly after the benefits were awarded. This resulted in his family having to navigate grief, the cost of his care, and additional challenges posed by the bureaucracy simply because of the timing of his passing.

We have already asked so much of our veterans and their families. It is entirely unconscionable that while in the fog of grief, we ask them to navigate paperwork and uncertainty regarding benefits that were rightly earned just because the day their loved one died doesn't align well with VA's direct deposit schedule.

The Ernest Peltz Accrued Veterans Benefits Act will relieve families of that unnecessary burden during a complicated time. This bill states that if a veteran dies before they are awarded their pension benefit and they pass away before the benefit has been paid out, that the pension benefit is awarded to the veteran's living spouse, living children, dependent parents, or the estate of that veteran.

H.R. 3123 closes an opening that families have unfortunately been slipping through.

We know of one family that this has affected, but we don't know how many other families have been touched by a bureaucratic system that felt cold and uncaring.

I thank Representative STEFANIK for her work in addressing this oversight. Much of the work we do on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs is centered on the promises that we make to veterans and their loved ones. This bill is just that, honoring not only a promise to our veterans, but also their families.

This pension benefit is not, nor was it ever, a handout. It was an earned benefit that Mr. Peltz secured through his service in World War II. I will continue to fight until every beneficiary gets the benefits that they earned, no matter how long that takes. We must continue to expand veterans' benefits for all those who have worn the uniform of this Nation.

Madam Speaker, I support this legislation and urge all my colleagues to do the same. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, at this time I yield such time as she may consume to the gentleman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK), the sponsor of this bill.

Ms. STEFANIK. Madam Speaker, I thank Chairman BOST for yielding me the time.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my legislation, the Ernest Peltz Accrued Veterans Benefits Act, H.R. 3123. I also thank Ranking Member TAKANO for his comments and support.

I have represented the Peltz family for well over a decade, and that included Ernest Peltz, a World War II veteran and American hero, who died a few years ago between Christmas and New Year's Day.

At that time, I heard from his son, Charles Peltz, who found himself caught in a maze of bureaucratic VA red tape. Instead of being able to focus on honoring the life and service of his father, the Peltz family was forced to contend with a system that failed the very veteran it was designed to serve.

Hero Ernest Peltz did everything right. He served admirably and honorably in our military. He continued a lifetime of public service. He applied for his accrued veterans pension benefit, and the Department of Veterans Affairs approved it while he was still alive.

I even got a call from his family as Ernest Peltz was on his death bed, that he was asking to make sure the VA benefits would be there. I encouraged them and said that absolutely we would do everything to make that possible. Yet, due to a processing error, the VA did not deposit the funds until after Mr. Peltz' passing. In an even more troubling turn, the VA then clawed those funds back from the Peltz family even though Ernest Peltz was alive at the time that this benefit was approved and fully earned.

As a result, the Peltz family was left to shoulder the financial burden of his father's care on their own, compounding grief with stress, uncertainty, and frustration. In short, the Peltz family was penalized for the VA's mistakes. This is unacceptable.

This is why I have been working for over 2 years to pass the Ernest Peltz Accrued Veterans Benefits Act. We have worked closely with the Peltz family, veterans service organizations, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, including the lead Democrat sponsor, Congressman RO KHANNA, to craft this legislation to correct this moral wrong.

This bill eliminates the burden on a veteran's surviving family by ensuring that the veteran is entitled to receive their pre-approved pension benefits within the month that death occurs.

□ 1710

I represent New York's 21st Congressional District, representing the largest number of veterans in any district in New York State. That is why I am proud to take action to make sure no family mourning the loss of a loved one who is a veteran has to deal with VA red tape and these bureaucratic mistakes.

This commonsense, bipartisan legislation honors the legacy of World War II Veteran Ernest Peltz and takes a critical step toward improving the VA's effectiveness and accountability.

What was amazing about this process, while mourning the loss of their father, Charles Peltz shared with me his priority was making sure that this never happened to another family again. That is why we are working to pass this bill today.

I thank Charles Peltz for his work with my office and with me directly. I am grateful for the bipartisan support, and I urge a "yes" to pass it on the floor.

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

I encourage my fellow colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 3123, the Ernest Peltz Accrued Veterans Benefits Act, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. 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. 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. 3123, 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.

**ESTABLISHMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A PERSON AS A MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST, QUALIFIED TO PROVIDE CLINICAL SUPERVISION, IN THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION**

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 658) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish qualifications for the appointment of a person as a marriage and family therapist, qualified to provide clinical supervision, in the Veterans Health Administration, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 658

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A PERSON AS A MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST, QUALIFIED TO PROVIDE CLINICAL SUPERVISION, IN THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.**

Section 7402(b)(10) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respectively;

(2) by inserting "(A)" before "To be eligible"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph (B):

"(B) To be eligible to be appointed to a marriage and family therapist position and qualified to provide clinical supervision, a person must—

"(i) have the qualifications set forth in subparagraph (A); and

"(ii) be recognized by the State described in clause (ii) of such subparagraph as a provider of, or otherwise allowed by such State to provide, clinical supervision."

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. 658, 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. 658, as amended. This bill was introduced by my colleague Representative JULIA BROWNLEY of California.

Under current law, only one accrediting body has power over who can work as a marriage and family therapist in supervisory roles at the VHA. This is an unnecessary burden. It unnecessarily restricts access to licensed marriage and family therapists who can help veterans grow and maintain healthy familial relationships.

With Representative BROWNLEY's bill, the law would include more eligible licensors to ensure a sufficient pipeline of therapists are able to work at VA and help our Nation's veterans, if they need it.

Madam Speaker, I thank Representative BROWNLEY for her bill, 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 today in support of H.R. 658, legislation introduced by my colleague Representative JULIA BROWNLEY of California. This legislation would establish qualifications for the appointment of marriage and family therapists to provide clinical supervision in the Veterans Health Administration.

Licensed marriage and family therapists provide critical therapy and support to address the unique challenges that military veterans and their families face.

Veterans and their families are no strangers to facing life challenges when transitioning from Active Duty, whether that is adjusting to life as a civilian, navigating new family dynamics, or even dealing with medical needs or big moves.

Licensed marriage and family therapists help individuals and couples develop coping strategies and mechanisms to face these challenges head-on, and help ensure those who serve our Nation have the resources they need to support themselves and their families.

Licensed marriage and family therapists have provided care to countless veterans since 2010 when VA first established qualification standards for the profession and began hiring licensed marriage and family therapists.

However, in 2018, the VA amended its qualification standards and created a new requirement that licensed marriage and family therapists who want to serve as supervisors or managers must obtain the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy's "approved supervisor" designation.

Currently, the VA does not require licensed professional mental health counselors, social workers, or other mental health providers to obtain a designation from a private organization in order to serve as clinical supervisors.

Additionally, the VA's current qualification standards are not in alignment with State law. All 50 States and the District of Columbia license or certify licensed marriage and family therapists and have requirements for individuals who want to provide clinical supervision. However, only two States, North Carolina and Tennessee, require that clinical supervisors hold a private association's "approved supervisor" designation.

The VA's current qualification standards place licensed marriage and family therapists at a disadvantage when it comes to retention and promotion. There are thousands of licensed marriage and family therapists who are