

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BROWNLEY), my good friend, the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Health, and also the author of this important legislation.

Ms. BROWNLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 239, the Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act, my bill to ensure that veterans have access to contraception coverage without any copay.

I thank the chairman for working with me to advance this legislation.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, women using civilian health insurance may access basic contraceptive services, like the pill or an IUD, without any copay. Active Duty servicemembers can also receive contraceptive care without any copay.

However, women veterans who receive healthcare through the VA do not have access to the same benefit.

Clearly, we need to fix this inequity. The benefits of contraception are widely recognized.

Choosing when, or if, to have a family is essential to women's health and to their economic security.

Today, there are two million women veterans living in the United States, and women comprise the fastest growing subpopulation within the military and veteran populations; yet many of their health needs go unaddressed in a VA system that has not evolved to equitably serve a rapidly changing population.

As chairwoman of the Women Veterans Task Force and chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, I have worked to identify disparities in healthcare for women veterans and, where necessary, introduce, advocate for, and pass legislation that eliminates these gaps.

Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country. It is past time that we ensure that they get the equitable healthcare they have earned and deserve.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 239.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I want to thank Ranking Member BOST for pointing out that the previous ranking member and previous chairman of this committee, an OB/GYN, Representative ROE, stood in firm support of this legislation. I know him to also be someone of very firm pro-life convictions. I am very proud of the bipartisan support that has gathered around Ms. BROWNLEY's legislation.

Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 239.

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. ROSENDALE. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

HOMELESS VETERANS CREDIT REPAIR, ENHANCEMENT, AND DEBT IMPROVEMENT FOR TOMORROW ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1257) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the effect of financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1257

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 "Homeless Veterans Credit Repair, Enhancement, and Debt Improvement for Tomorrow Act" or the "Homeless Veterans CREDIT Act".

SEC. 2. STUDY ON FINANCIAL AND CREDIT COUNSELING.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a comprehensive study on—

(1) the use of and variation of financial and credit counseling services available for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability;

(2) barriers to accessing financial and credit counseling for such veterans; and

(3) the ability to evaluate and assess the potential effects of financial and credit counseling for such veterans with respect to housing, employment, income, and other outcomes the Secretary determines appropriate.

(b) METHODOLOGY.—In conducting the study under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(1) survey—

(A) homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability who are enrolled in the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program;

(B) such veterans who do not seek or receive the care or services under such program or a similar program;

(C) grantees of the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program;

(D) financial and credit counselors; and

(E) persons who are subject matter experts regarding the use of financial and credit counseling services that the Secretary determines appropriate; and

(2) administer the survey to a representative sample of homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability in areas with high veteran homelessness.

(c) USE AND VARIATION OF SERVICES.—In conducting the study under subsection (a)(1), the Secretary shall—

(1) use data from the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program and other data collected by the Department of Veterans Affairs, data collected by other departments or agencies of the Federal Govern-

ment, and data collected by nongovernmental entities to compare the use of and variation of financial and credit counseling services available for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability and such use and variation for other individuals; and

(2) assess such services made available through the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program, including with respect to the types, modes of delivery, duration, consistency, and quality, of such services.

(d) BARRIERS TO COUNSELING.—In conducting the study under subsection (a)(2), the Secretary shall conduct research on the effects of the following perceived barriers to financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability surveyed in the study:

(1) The cost of financial and credit counseling services.

(2) The perceived stigma associated with seeking financial and credit counseling assistance.

(3) The effect of driving distance or availability of other forms of transportation to the nearest facility that received a grant under the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program.

(4) The availability of child care.

(5) The comprehension of eligibility requirements for, and the scope of services available under, the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program.

(6) The effectiveness of outreach for the services available to such veterans under the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program.

(7) The location and operating hours of facilities that provide services to such veterans under the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program.

(8) The COVID-19 pandemic and other health related issues.

(9) Such other significant barriers as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(e) EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS OF COUNSELING.—

(1) EFFECTS.—In conducting the study under subsection (a)(3), the Secretary shall conduct research on the ability to evaluate and assess the potential effects of financial and credit counseling services on homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability with respect to the following:

(A) The effects of such services on employment by comparing the veterans who received such services and the veterans who did not receive such services.

(B) The effects of such services on housing status by comparing the veterans who received such services and the veterans who did not receive such services.

(C) The effects of such services on income by comparing the veterans who received such services and the veterans who did not receive such services.

(D) The effects of such services on credit score by comparing the veterans who received such services and the veterans who did not receive such services.

(E) The effects of such services on other outcomes the Secretary determines appropriate.

(2) DATA AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—In carrying out paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) determine the relevant data that is available to the Secretary and determine the confidence of the Secretary with respect to accessing any additional data the Secretary may require; and

(B) provide recommendations regarding the optimal research or evaluation design that would generate the greatest insights and value.

(f) DISCHARGE BY CONTRACT.—The Secretary may seek to enter into a contract with a qualified independent entity or organization to carry out the study and research required under this section, including such an entity or organization that is able to access credit scores, data maintained by the Internal Revenue Service, and other data beneficial to studying income.

(g) MANDATORY REVIEW OF DATA BY CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF DEPARTMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ensure that the head of each element of the Department of Veterans Affairs specified in paragraph (2) reviews the results of the study conducted under subsection (a). The head of each such element shall submit to the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management the findings of the head with respect to the study, including recommendations regarding what data the Secretary should collect from grantees under the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program.

(2) SPECIFIED ELEMENTS.—The elements of the Department of Veterans Affairs specified in this paragraph are the following:

(A) The Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans established under section 2066 of title 38, United States Code.

(B) The Advisory Committee on Women Veterans established under section 542 of title 38, United States Code.

(C) The Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans established under section 544 of title 38, United States Code.

(D) The Homeless Programs Office of the Veterans Health Administration.

(E) The Office of Tribal Government Relations of the Department.

(h) REPORTS.—

(1) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress an interim report on the study under subsection (a).

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 30 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the study under subsection (a). The report shall include—

(A) the findings of the head of each element of the Department specified under subsection (g)(2); and

(B) recommendations for such administrative and legislative action as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(i) DEFINITION.—In this section:

(1) The term “homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability” means veterans who are homeless (as that term is defined in subsection (a) or (b) of section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302)).

(2) The term “Supportive Services for Veterans Families program” means the program established pursuant to section 2044 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.

(a) TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.—Title 38, United States Code, is amended as follows:

(1) In section 1786(d), as added by section 3006 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315), by striking paragraph (3).

(2) In section 3673(f), as added by section 1023 of such Act, by striking paragraph (3).

(b) JOHNNY ISAKSON AND DAVID P. ROE, M.D. VETERANS HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2020.—The Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315) is amended as follows:

(1) In section 3010—

(A) in subsection (a), by striking “The Secretary” and inserting “Subject to the availability of appropriations for such purpose, the Secretary”; and

(B) by striking subsection (h).

(2) In section 4201(a), by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3) USE OF AUTHORITY.—The Secretary shall ensure that paragraph (1) is carried out in accordance with established procedures for reprogrammings or transfers, including with respect to presenting a request for a reprogramming of funds.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 1257, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, credit and financial counseling services remain a top 10 unmet need for veterans experiencing or who are at risk of homelessness.

This bill directs the VA to study the efficacy and barriers to credit and financial counseling for homeless and unstably housed veterans, and to provide recommendations for improvements to these services.

Under the Homeless Veterans CREDIT Act, the Secretary will work with outside organizations to review these barriers, and submit to Congress concrete steps we can take to expand credit access to veterans in need.

H.R. 1257, as amended, has the support of VA and key veteran service organizations, like the VFW, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the IAVA.

Also included in this legislation are various oversight improvements to existing law that our committee has worked on with the House Appropriations Committee, and I thank my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for their hard work. I therefore, ask my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1257, as amended.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1257, as amended, the Homeless Veterans Credit Repair, Enhancement, and Debt Improvement for Tomorrow—or CREDIT—Act.

This bill would direct the VA to study the effects of financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans.

COVID-19 has impacted our economy and our lives in many ways.

The most recent Department of Housing and Urban Development

Point-in-Time—or the PIT—count found that, on a single night in January of 2020, an estimated 37,252 veterans were homeless.

We must do everything we can to help eliminate veteran homelessness and prevent those who have worn the uniform of our country from having to worry about where they will lay their head at night.

This bill, which I am proud to support, would direct the VA to conduct a comprehensive study on the financial and credit counseling services for homeless veterans.

This study would use data from the Supportive Services for Veterans Families—or the SSVF—program to look at barriers that homeless veterans are facing in relation to financial counseling services.

I thank Congressman PALLONE for his hard work on crafting this bill and for his continued support of our Nation's veterans.

This bill, as amended, also includes some technical changes to the omnibus bill that was signed into law earlier this year that were requested by the Committee on Appropriations.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), my good friend, the author of this critical piece of legislation, and also the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, my friend from California, for moving this bill through the committee as quickly as he did.

I rise today in support of the bill, H.R. 1257, the Homeless Veterans Credit Repair, Enhancement, and Debt Improvement for Tomorrow Act.

We know that veterans' homelessness continues to be a blight on our Nation. Congress and advocates from across the country have worked hard to nearly halve the homeless veteran population in the past decade.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic jeopardized this progress by negatively impacting the credit and financial stability of our Nation's veterans.

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Now is the time to redouble our efforts and do everything we can to ensure stable housing for veterans. We must start by examining the underlying causes of veteran homelessness in our Nation.

The VA has declared credit and financial counseling services a top 10 unmet need for our homeless veterans. My bill directs the Secretary of the VA to conduct a study of the credit and financial counseling services available to homeless veterans and veterans facing housing instability. The study will assess current services available to veterans and the barriers they face in utilizing them, including the COVID-19 pandemic and other health challenges.

During a time of such economic uncertainty, we must look out for our

most vulnerable communities, including homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability. We have a responsibility to help those who served in uniform and stood ready to make the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

The CREDIT Act will identify the credit and financial counseling services needed to help our veterans avoid financial pitfalls and make informed decisions about their future.

Madam Speaker, again, I thank Chairman TAKANO for his partnership on this issue, and I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense, bipartisan legislation. Together, we can improve veterans' financial literacy to build a better life for themselves after they complete their service to our country.

Madam Speaker, I also thank my staff member, Jake Freed, who basically came up with this idea, after talking to various veterans groups, and put this together.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, we know that preventing homelessness is especially critical as we try to emerge out of this pandemic.

Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support Chairman PALLONE's bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1257, the Homeless Veterans Credit Act, and would like my good friend Chairman PALLONE for his work to bring this bill to the floor.

The freedom and luxuries that we are afforded on a daily basis are made possible by the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform. It is unthinkable that, after returning home from serving our country, veterans are often faced with several challenges including a lack of accessibility to quality and affordable housing. The state of Texas is home to the second largest population of veterans in the United States, and veterans homelessness is becoming an increasingly prevalent issue in our communities.

That is why I am proud to support the Homeless Veterans Credit Act. This bill will direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the effectiveness of financial and credit counseling services currently available to homeless veterans and how those services can be improved so these veterans can move a step closer to securing stable housing, employment and income. Such studies are critical for us as legislators to determine the efficiency of the institutions, programs, and funding levels in place to assist veterans.

As Chair of the Congressional Homeless-ness Caucus, I remain committed to advocating on behalf of veterans experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. This pandemic has brought to light the stark inequities in access to housing for veterans, but I am confident that this bill will set the stage for transformative efforts to reform care for those in need.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to voting in favor of this bipartisan, commonsense legislation and would urge my colleagues to do the same.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1257, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the effect of financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VA POLICE IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2429) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the staffing, transparency, and accountability of the law enforcement operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2429

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 Police Improvement and Accountability Act".

SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENTS TO TRANSPARENCY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—Section 902 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(e)(1) The Secretary shall publish on the internet website of each facility of the Department the following information with respect to the facility:

"(A) Summaries and statistics covering the previous five-year period regarding—

"(i) arrests made by and tickets issued by Department police officers;

"(ii) prosecutions, ticketing, and other actions relating to such arrests;

"(iii) the use of force and weapons discharge by Department police officers; and

"(iv) complaints, investigations, and disciplinary actions regarding Department police officers.

"(B) Contact information for employees of the Department and the public to directly contact the police force of the facility, including for an individual (or the representative, attorney, or authorized agent of the individual) to request information regarding the arrest, ticketing, detainment, use of force, or other police matters pertaining to that individual.

"(2) The Secretary shall ensure that each police force of a facility of the Department is able to provide to an individual who contacts the police force pursuant to paragraph (1)(B) the information described in such paragraph."

(b) USE OF BODY WORN CAMERAS BY DEPARTMENT POLICE OFFICERS.—

(1) REQUIREMENT.—Subsection (a) of such section 902 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(3) Beginning not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this paragraph, the Secretary shall require Department police officers to use cameras worn on the individual police officer's person that record and store audio and video (commonly known as 'body worn cameras')."

(2) GUIDANCE.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue, and make publicly available, guidance on the use of body worn cameras by Department police officers pursuant to section 902(a)(3) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by paragraph (1).

(3) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall issue the guidance under paragraph (2) in consultation with veterans service organizations, civil rights organizations, law enforcement organizations, law enforcement accreditation organizations, privacy rights organizations, and other relevant organizations or experts.

(c) DATA AND REPORTING ON POLICE INCIDENTS.—Section 902 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(f) POLICE INCIDENTS.—(1)(A) The Secretary shall track and analyze the following information regarding the police force of the Department:

"(i) Arrests made by and tickets issued by Department police officers.

"(ii) Prosecutions, ticketing, and other actions relating to such arrests.

"(iii) The use of force and weapons discharge.

"(iv) Complaints, investigations, and disciplinary actions.

"(B) The Secretary shall carry out subparagraph (A) by implementing one or more Department-wide data systems.

"(2)(A) Beginning not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this subsection, the Secretary shall ensure that each incident described in subparagraph (C) is promptly reported to the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for operations, preparedness, security, and law enforcement functions.

"(B) The Assistant Secretary shall, in a timely manner—

"(i) review each incident described in subparagraph (C)(i) that is reported under subparagraph (A); and

"(ii) investigate each incident described in subparagraph (C)(ii) that is reported under subparagraph (A).

"(C) An incident described in this subparagraph is either of the following:

"(i) An incident, including an allegation, of the use of force by a Department police officer.

"(ii) An incident, including an allegation, of the use of force by a Department police officer that results in any person receiving medical attention."

(d) PLAN ON POLICE STAFFING.—The Secretary shall develop a plan that establishes minimum standards for police staffing at each facility of the Department, including with respect to—

(1) the number of Department police officers assigned to each facility; and

(2) the pay grades for such officers.

(e) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the implementation of this section and the amendments made by this section. The report shall include the following: