

SECTION 1. ROLE OF DOCTORS OF PODIATRIC MEDICINE IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) CLARIFICATION OF ROLE.—Section 7306 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—
(A) in paragraph (6), by striking “a Director of Podiatric Service.”;

(B) by redesignating paragraph (10) as paragraph (11); and

(C) by inserting after paragraph (9) the following new paragraph:

“(10) A Podiatric Medical Director, who shall be a qualified doctor of podiatric medicine and who shall be responsible to the Under Secretary for Health for the operation of the Podiatric Service.”;

(2) in subsection (b)(1), by inserting “podiatric medicine,” after “doctors of medicine.”; and

(3) in subsection (c), by striking “and (8)” and inserting “(8), and (10)”.

(b) CLARIFICATION OF PAY GRADE.—Section 7404 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2), by inserting “, podiatrists,” after “physicians”; and

(2) in subsection (b), in the first heading of the list following the colon, by striking “PODIATRIST” and inserting “PODIATRIST (DPM)”.

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 have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2545.

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, I am pleased to support H.R. 2545 to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the role of doctors of podiatric medicine in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2545 is offered by former Veterans' Affairs Committee member, Dr. BRAD WENSTRUP. This legislation seeks to clarify a technical error affecting the Director of Podiatric Services which developed following the inclusion of Dr. WENSTRUP's VA Provider Equity Act in the MISSION Act.

The renaming of the position to Podiatric Medical Director will create equity by allowing this position holder to be paid on par with their peers rather than below, which is currently the case.

If VA is to recruit top talent, we must ensure VA is able to offer competitive salaries whenever possible, that is why I support this legislation and I hope my colleagues will too.

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. 2545, a bill that would clar-

ify the role of podiatrists in the VA health system. Podiatrists are increasingly called upon to care for veterans in the VA medical facilities.

This bill would make a technical correction to current law to ensure that they are properly compensated for their important work.

This bill is sponsored by Dr. WENSTRUP. Dr. WENSTRUP is a veteran, a podiatrist, and a former member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am grateful for his continued commitment to those who he serves.

Madam Speaker, I urge every Member of the Chamber to join me and Dr. WENSTRUP and the chairman in supporting this bill today, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I encourage everyone to support this piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support the legislation and join me in passing H.R. 2545, 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. 2545.

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. TAKANO. 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.

VA HOSPITALS ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 293) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish qualifications for the human resources positions within the Veterans Health Administration 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. 293

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 Hospitals Establishing Leadership Performance Act”.

SEC. 2. QUALIFICATIONS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES POSITIONS WITHIN THE VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the

enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) establish qualifications for each human resources position within the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

(2) establish standardized performance metrics for each such position; and

(3) submit to Congress a report containing the qualifications and standardized performance metrics established under paragraphs (1) and (2).

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the establishment of the qualifications and performance metrics under subsection (a), the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate a report containing—

(1) a description of the implementation of such qualifications and performance metrics; and

(2) an assessment of the quality of such qualifications and performance metrics.

SEC. 3. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the requirements of this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized to be appropriated.

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 have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 293.

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, I am pleased to support H.R. 293, the VA Hospitals Establishing Leadership Performance Act, introduced by our committee's ranking member, Mr. BOST.

This bill would require VA to establish qualifications and performance metrics for human resources positions within the Veterans Health Administration. This legislation follows a 2017 Government Accountability Office report that found human capital process deficiencies, such as a lack of performance metrics for certain positions.

GAO concluded that these deficiencies negatively affected VA's ability to serve veterans. The legislation does not specify what metrics VA must use, but leaves that determination up to VA. Instituting these human resource management improvements at VA is a commonsense, good-government step.

H.R. 293 was favorably reported by the committee, and I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting the VA Hospitals Establishing Leadership Performance Act.

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. 293, VA Hospitals Establishing Leadership Performance Act. I believe that a high-performing organization needs to have clear qualifications and metrics by which they can measure success. Without them, organizations lose their way.

That is why I am proud to have, once again, introduced the VA Hospital Establishing Leadership Performance Act. My bill would require VA to establish standardized qualifications and performance metrics for each human resource position within the Veterans Health Administration.

A few years ago, the committee found that certain HR professionals working in the VA healthcare system did not have the proper education or experience for the jobs that they held.

For example, one HR director at a medical center lacked both a college degree and relevant work experience when hired for the job. This bill would make sure that that does not happen again by requiring HR staff to be qualified and equipped to handle VA's complex human resources needs.

During the 115th Congress, this bill passed the House by a vote of 417-0. I hope that it, again, gains that type of support with this entire Chamber.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I have no further questions, and I am prepared to close.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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 urge all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 293, 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. 293.

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. TAKANO. 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.

SOLE LIABILITY FOR TRANSFERRED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE BY AN INDIVIDUAL WHO FAILS TO COMPLETE A SERVICE AGREEMENT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 290) to amend title 38, United

States Code, to render an individual, who transfers certain educational assistance, to which the individual is entitled because of an agreement by such individual to serve in the Armed Forces, to a dependent of that individual, and who fails to complete such agreement, solely liable for the overpayment of such educational assistance, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 290

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

SECTION 1. SOLE LIABILITY FOR TRANSFERRED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE BY AN INDIVIDUAL WHO FAILS TO COMPLETE A SERVICE AGREEMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (i) of section 3319 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking “In the event” and inserting “Subject to paragraph (2), in the event”; and

(B) by inserting “of this title” after “section 3685”;

(2) in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (2)—

(A) in the heading, by striking “IN GENERAL” and inserting “SOLE LIABILITY”; and

(B) by inserting “for which the individual shall be solely liable to the United States for the amount of the overpayment for purposes of section 3685 of this title” before the period at the end; and

(3) in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (2)—

(A) in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking “Subparagraph (A) shall not apply” and inserting “Neither the individual nor the dependent shall be liable to the United States for the amount of the overpayment for purposes of section 3685 of this title”; and

(B) in clause (ii), by inserting “of this title” after “section 3311(c)(4)”.

(b) REVERSION.—Effective October 1, 2024, such subsection (i) is amended to read as it read on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 2. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

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 have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 290, 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, the eligibility for veterans to transfer their earned educational benefits is limited based on service time and commitments to additional service time. Recently, there have been a number of cases where DOD erroneously calculated servicemembers' time in service, allowing the servicemember to transfer a benefit when they should not have, as in the case of Russell Dotson.

In Mr. Dotson's case, he was told by the Navy that he was able to transfer his benefit to his daughter. Unfortunately, the Navy was 6 days off in its calculation. That led to his daughter's GI Bill-covered tuition at DePaul University being cut off. Now, she and her father, a veteran who served 22 years and was honored for saving two lives in Afghanistan, are left having to repay more than \$20,000.

As a result of these errors, the veteran and their dependent are saddled with a huge bill, that is overpayment, for the cost of erroneously billed educational costs. The debt levied on the dependent is costly and can ruin their credit before they enter the labor force, which could impact their housing and job opportunities.

H.R. 290, as amended, limits liabilities to ensure that there aren't surprise debts created by errors in paperwork. This legislation has been supported by VSOs such as the VFW, American Legion, and the Student Veterans of America.

Madam Speaker, I thank Ranking Member BOST for his work on this issue. I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 290, as amended, and 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 my bill, H.R. 290, as amended, to create a sole liability for GI Bill payments during transfer in certain cases. This bill would hold a servicemember liable should they transfer the GI Bill entitlement but fail to complete their service obligation.

The GI Bill is a fantastic benefit. The GI Bill has helped tens of thousands of veterans and their families obtain a higher education. Some servicemembers are eligible to transfer their GI Bill entitlement to a dependent. They can do this once they have completed 6 years of active service and agree to serve an additional 4 years.

Under my bill, if the servicemember begins to transfer the entitlement at the 6-year mark but fails to complete the additional 4 years of the required service, their dependent would not be held liable for overpayments. This would help dependents avoid unexpected VA debt for actions outside of their control. Some overpayments can total hundreds of thousands of dollars. It is only right that we ensure that they are assigned to the right person.

Madam Speaker, I thank our VSO partners, especially those at the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors for bringing this issue to my attention.