

servicemember accidentally puts on their GI Bill transfer form that the benefits for a child or other dependent expire on a certain date and the servicemember later dies before the benefit is used, there is no way for the record to be changed to allow a dependent to use the benefit.

If the veteran were still alive, they could go back in the system and change the date at any time. TAPS has seen this happen to several family members and has asked us to look into it and try to correct the problem. When we contacted the Department of Defense to see if they could address this with an administrative fix, we were told that a legislative correction was needed, and this is why we are here today to introduce my bill.

The bill, as amended, includes this change that would eliminate the requirement to specify a period of transfer of Post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement to a dependent. This would prevent those entitled to post-9/11 education benefits from accidentally inputting the wrong date and therefore preventing the dependent from taking advantage of the benefit.

It may seem a small detail, but for those individuals it is a very, very large benefit. I am grateful to TAPS for identifying this issue and grateful for Congressman BUCHANAN as well as Chairman TAKANO and Ranking Member BOST for their support. I would like to thank the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for their assistance.

Mr. TRONE. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing this important piece of legislation, H.R. 6604, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage 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 Maryland (Mr. TRONE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6604, 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. BISHOP of North Carolina. Mr. 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.

STRENGTHENING OVERSIGHT FOR VETERANS ACT OF 2021

Mr. TRONE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 2687) to provide the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs testimonial subpoena authority, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2687

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 "Strengthening Oversight for Veterans Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. TESTIMONIAL SUBPOENA AUTHORITY OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 312 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d)(1)(A) In addition to the authority otherwise provided by the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) and in accordance with the requirements of this subsection, the Inspector General, in carrying out the provisions of this section, may require by subpoena the attendance and testimony of witnesses as necessary in the performance of the functions assigned to the Inspector General by the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) and this section, which in the case of contumacy or refusal to obey, such subpoena shall be enforceable by order of any appropriate district court of the United States.

“(B) The Inspector General may not require by subpoena the attendance and testimony under subparagraph (A) of—

“(i) any current Federal employee; or
“(ii) any witness as part of any criminal proceeding.

“(2) The authority to issue a subpoena under paragraph (1) may not be delegated.

“(3)(A) The Inspector General shall notify the Attorney General of the intent to issue a subpoena under paragraph (1).

“(B) Not later than 10 days after the date on which the Attorney General is notified pursuant to subparagraph (A), the Attorney General may object in writing to the issuance of the subpoena if the subpoena will interfere with an ongoing investigation and, if the Attorney General makes such an objection, the Inspector General may not issue the subpoena.

“(C) If the Attorney General does not object in writing to the issuance of the subpoena during the 10-day period described in subparagraph (B), the Inspector General may issue the subpoena.

“(4) Before requiring by subpoena under paragraph (1) the attendance and testimony of a witness, the Inspector General shall, to the degree practicable—

“(A) notify the witness of the intent of the Inspector General to issue the subpoena; and
“(B) provide the witness an opportunity to attend and testify voluntarily.

“(5) Whenever requiring by subpoena under paragraph (1) the attendance and testimony of a witness, the Inspector General shall, to the greatest extent practicable, travel to residence of the witness, the principal place of business of the witness, or other similar location that is in proximity to the residence of the witness.

“(6)(A) Along with each semiannual report submitted by the Inspector General pursuant to section 5(b) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App. 5(b)), the Inspector General shall include a report on the exercise of the authority provided by paragraph (1).

“(B) Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include, for the most recently completed six-month period, the following:

“(i) The number of testimonial subpoenas issued and the number of individuals interviewed pursuant to such subpoenas.

“(ii) The number of proposed testimonial subpoenas with respect to which the Attorney General objected under paragraph (3)(B).

“(iii) A discussion of any challenges or concerns that the Inspector General has en-

countered exercising the authority provided by paragraph (1).

“(iv) Such other matters as the Inspector General considers appropriate.

“(7)(A) The authority provided by paragraph (1)(A) shall terminate on May 31, 2025.

“(B) The termination of authority by subparagraph (A) shall not affect the enforceability of a subpoena issued under paragraph (1)(A) before the date of such termination.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (d) of section 312 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) SEMIANNUAL REPORT.—Paragraph (6) of subsection (d) of such section, as so added, shall apply beginning on the date that is seven months after the first day of the first fiscal year beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GARCIA of Texas). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. TRONE) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TRONE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on S. 2687.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this bipartisan bill, S. 2687, the Strengthening Oversight for Veterans Act, introduced by Senator TESTER. I thank Representative RICE and Delegate Radewagen for introducing the House companion to this bill.

This bill seeks to strengthen the VA Office of the Inspector General by granting the office testimonial subpoena authority, an essential tool for conducting oversight.

Too often, individuals with important information relevant to an investigation retire or move to a position in another agency, thereby evading OIG investigations. Currently, the inspector general cannot require testimony of these former employees. Questioning these individuals could shed light on wrongdoing or mismanagement that puts the care and safety of our veterans and their families at risk.

This bill has bipartisan support in Congress as well as from Veterans of Foreign Wars, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and the Project on Government Oversight.

Again, Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation. 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 S. 2687, which would provide the VA inspector general with limited subpoena power. In some investigations, VA employees who may have important information have left the Department. At that point, the inspector general has no authority to compel their

testimony, which can leave investigations weak or incomplete. This bill would give the inspector general the authority to subpoena those former employees.

However, this authority is not without checks and balances. The bill would require the IG to notify the Attorney General before using the subpoena. The Attorney General may object and prevent the IG from issuing the subpoena if doing so would interfere with an ongoing investigation.

This authority would sunset in May of 2025 and would require Congress to then evaluate the need for this authority and if it should be continued. This is a good bill to expand oversight of the VA, and it has my full support.

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

Mr. TRONE. Madam Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing S. 2687, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. TRONE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 2687.

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. BISHOP of North Carolina. 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.

PAYMENT OF VA EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE VIA ELECTRONIC FUND TRANSFER TO A FOREIGN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr. TRONE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7375) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to update the payment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to allow for electronic fund transfer of educational assistance, administered by the Secretary, to a foreign institution of higher education.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7375

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

SECTION 1. PAYMENT OF VA EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE VIA ELECTRONIC FUND TRANSFER TO A FOREIGN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall update the payment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to allow for electronic fund transfer of educational assistance, administered by the Secretary, to a foreign institution of higher education that—

(1) provides an approved course of education to an eligible recipient of such assistance; and

(2) does not have—

- (A) an employer identification number; or
- (B) an account with a domestic bank.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TRONE. 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. 7375.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7375, introduced by Representative MIKIE SHERRILL.

This legislation directs VA to finally update its student payment systems to allow for educational assistance funds to be transmitted electronically to a foreign institution of higher education, as long as the institution is providing an approved course of study. Our committee has heard from students and schools about the impact of VA's inability to modernize its systems for student payments.

The bill has bipartisan support as well from Disabled American Veterans, Student Veterans of America, Veterans Education Success, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Madam Speaker, Representative SHERRILL's legislation is a response to strong advocacy for our student veterans studying abroad who are often unsure how their benefits will translate overseas.

Madam Speaker, I thank her for offering this legislation, I urge support and passage, 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 H.R. 7375, a bill that would streamline the payment of GI Bill benefits.

Specifically, the bill would require that, within 90 days of enactment, VA update the electronic fund transfer system for education benefits. Without this change, an overseas school is required to maintain a U.S.-based bank account so that VA can electronically transfer payments for VA beneficiaries who attend their institution. This requirement has kept some schools from participating in the GI Bill. This leads to fewer educational choices for our veterans.

I am pleased that this bill would address this issue and expand opportunities for veterans to use their hard-earned education benefits.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support H.R. 7375, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TRONE. Madam Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 7375, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. TRONE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7375.

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. BISHOP of North Carolina. 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.

STUDENT VETERAN WORK STUDY MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. TRONE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6376) to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend eligibility for a certain work-study allowance paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certain individuals who pursue programs of rehabilitation, education, or training on at least a half-time basis, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6376

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 "Student Veteran Work Study Modernization Act".

SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM TO EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR A CERTAIN WORK-STUDY ALLOWANCE PAID BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS WHO PURSUE CERTAIN PROGRAMS ON AT LEAST A HALF-TIME BASIS.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary shall expand eligibility for the work-study allowance under section 3485 of title 38, United States Code, to individuals who are pursuing programs of rehabilitation, education, or training specified in subsection (b) of such section at a rate equal to at least half of that required of a full-time student.

(b) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER WORK-STUDY INDIVIDUALS.—In carrying out the pilot program under subsection (a), the Secretary shall ensure the provisions of section 3485 of title 38, United States Code, apply with respect to the individuals specified in subsection (a) of this section in the same manner as to the individuals specified in subsection (b) of such section 3485, except with respect to the requirement of at least three-quarter-time student status.

(c) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the pilot program under subsection (a) during the five-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the pilot program.

SEC. 3. ANNUAL REPORT REGARDING VETERANS WHO PARTICIPATE IN WORK-STUDY.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and annually