

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, 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. 753, 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. Mr. 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.

REMOVING EXTRANEANOUS LOOPHOLES INSURING EVERY VETERAN EMERGENCY ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 815) to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 815

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 "Removing Extraneous Loopholes Insuring Every Veteran Emergency Act" or the "RELIEVE Act".

SEC. 2. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR REIMBURSEMENT FOR EMERGENCY TREATMENT FURNISHED TO VETERANS.

(a) ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.—Section 1725(b)(2)(B) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting " , unless such emergency treatment was furnished during the 60-day period following the date on which the veteran enrolled in the health care system specified in subparagraph (A), in which case no requirement for prior receipt of care shall apply" before the period.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to emergency treatment furnished on or after the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. MODIFICATION OF CERTAIN HOUSING LOAN FEES.

The loan fee table in section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "November 14, 2031" each place it appears and inserting "December 28, 2031".

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 have 5

legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 815, 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. 815, the RELIEVE Act, as amended.

This bill would close a loophole by covering emergency room medical expenses for veterans that are newly enrolled in VA care.

Under current law, VA does not reimburse veterans for emergency care received in the community if they have not visited a VA facility within 2 years. This policy includes veterans who are newly enrolled in the VA healthcare system but may not be considered active patients.

As a result, inactive veteran patients and their families could be met with undue payment burdens if they receive urgent medical treatment outside the VA.

Representative McMORRIS RODGERS' bill, H.R. 815, as amended, will correctly close this gap in emergency room services. This will help those in need at their most vulnerable time by extending VA reimbursement for 60 days after the veteran's enrollment in the VA healthcare.

As chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and a veteran, I have heard from fellow veterans who have been wrongfully affected by this confusing policy. One of my top priorities in Congress is to ensure that veterans receive necessary care without worrying about payment burdens and bureaucratic red tape.

I thank the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. RODGERS), the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN), and the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. PAPPAS) for introducing this common-sense legislation that takes care of our Nation's veterans by making sure they receive the care that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 815, 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 in support of H.R. 815, the RELIEVE Act, as amended, which is sponsored by Representative McMORRIS RODGERS and cosponsored by our committee members, Representatives PAPPAS and BERGMAN.

It will address a gap for a small population of veterans who first enrolled in VA healthcare within the last 60 days to be covered for emergency care in the community, even if they have not received any services from a VA provider.

Existing VA authorities for coverage of emergency care in the community are extremely complex. They are also not well understood by veterans, who often end up blindsided by massive medical bills that they can't afford.

Under current law, VA can only cover emergency care in the community for a nonservice-connected condition if the veteran was enrolled in VA healthcare and had used VA care within the 24 months before the emergency care episode.

This bill would make an exception for veterans who first enrolled in VA healthcare within 60 days before their emergency care episode. Such veterans may not have had a reason to use VA care yet or they may have experienced a wait time for a routine appointment.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 815, as amended, which will help ensure veterans who are new to VA healthcare will be covered for unexpected medical emergencies.

I also highlight a new meaningful benefit for veterans who are experiencing acute suicidal crises. It is important for veterans and their families and caregivers to know that VA has now implemented legislation I championed to remove cost from the equation when veterans are in imminent risk of self-harm.

VA will now fully cover up to 30 days of inpatient or residential care or up to 90 days of outpatient care for veterans who are experiencing an acute suicidal crisis, regardless of whether the veteran has ever enrolled in or used VA healthcare benefits. Any veteran experiencing a mental health crisis should call 988 and press 1 to speak with a trained professional from the Veterans Crisis Line.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. RODGERS).

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the RELIEVE Act. I introduced this bill after a veteran from Spokane reached out for my help. She had recently retired from service and was days away from her first VA appointment when she had a heart attack.

She was rushed to the ER, where she made a full recovery, but the VA refused to pay for her care.

Why? Because she hadn't seen a VA doctor in the last 24 months.

It didn't matter that she had just enrolled or that many VA facilities have 30- to 60-day delays. They denied her the coverage she needed, and her bills were piling up.

The RELIEVE Act would make this right. It waives the 24-month rule for 60 days, giving veterans time to establish care and ensure that they qualify for outside emergency coverage.

I am grateful to the leadership of the committee, as well as my colleagues, JACK BERGMAN and CHRIS PAPPAS, for helping lead this bill to help eliminate the emergency coverage gap. I urge my colleagues to join in giving veterans the treatment that they have earned.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. PAPPAS), the ranking

member of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee.

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. TAKANO for yielding and for his leadership, along with Chairman BOST, in getting this legislation to floor.

I thank Representatives MCMORRIS RODGERS and BERGMAN for cosponsoring this bill, which covers an important issue, emergency care coverage for veterans under the Community Care program.

This would close a glaring gap in emergency care for veterans who are transitioning from DOD to VA care. Right now, VA's failure to cover emergency care during this transitional period can result in a crippling amount of debt for veterans who need this kind of care.

These coverage gaps are all too common for our veterans. I have heard about it from my own constituents. In my first month in office, I was contacted by a veteran in Danville, New Hampshire, who put off seeking care for a medical emergency because he was unsure that VA would cover this care.

No veteran should ever think twice about seeking care during a medical emergency or be faced with exorbitant medical bills as a result of this care, so let's eliminate this gap for veterans who are recently enrolled in VA care. This is an important step forward represented by this legislation. There is certainly more work to do, but I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation today.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN), my good friend.

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, as a veteran and member of both the Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs Committees, assisting those in uniform as they transition from military service into civilian life and VA care is one of my top priorities.

Too often we see veterans get lost in the cracks of bureaucracy, and they fail to receive the healthcare they deserve through the VA or are facing unfair penalties while attempting to navigate life after their military service.

While we have made tremendous strides to improve veteran access to healthcare through the VA Community Care program, significant coverage gaps remain, and more improvements must be made by Congress.

Under current law, a veteran must have received health services at a VA facility within the past 2 years to be approved for retroactive coverage for emergency treatment through the Community Care program. This ignores the reality that it often takes more than a month for veterans to complete their first appointment at a VA facility following their enrollment in VA health.

This creates a gap in coverage that can force crippling debt onto a recently separated servicemember who is seeking emergency care. No veteran should

have to second-guess whether they should go to the emergency room due to bureaucratic mismanagement of their care coverage.

The bipartisan RELIEVE Act would address this gap in coverage by giving veterans a 60-day grace period after they are enrolled in VA health to complete their first doctor's appointment. During those 60 days, veterans will still be covered for emergency care at non-VA facilities, eliminating the gap, and ensuring veterans can receive the care they need without the worry of surprise bills.

I am proud to join Representatives MCMORRIS RODGERS and PAPPAS in introducing this important and common-sense legislation again this Congress. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of its passage.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. In closing, let me just say, it was a delight to join my colleague from Michigan at the Joni Mitchell concert and stand up and participate in "Big Yellow Taxi," which is his favorite song.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. 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. 815, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WOUNDED WARRIOR ACCESS ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1226) to amend title 38, United States Code, to allow for the electronic request of certain records, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1226

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 "Wounded Warrior Access Act".

SEC. 2. ELECTRONIC REQUEST OF CERTAIN RECORDS MAINTAINED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ELECTRONIC RECORD REQUESTS.—Section 5702 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (a) the following:

"(b)(1) The Secretary shall establish and maintain a secure website or online tool for a claimant or a duly recognized agent or representative of that claimant to submit an electronic request for such records.

"(2) The Secretary, upon receipt of a valid request made through the website or online

tool established under paragraph (1), shall provide to the requestor—

"(A) not later than 10 days after receipt, confirmation of such receipt; and

"(B) not later than 120 days after receipt, such records requested in the form selected by the requestor."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 5702(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking "in writing" and inserting "in writing, including an electronic request submitted through the website or online tool established under subsection (b).";

(2) in paragraph (1), by striking "and" at the end;

(3) in paragraph (2), by striking the period at the end and inserting "; and"; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

"(3) the format in which such copy is desired, including whether in printed form or by downloadable file."

(c) DEADLINE; ESTABLISHMENT OF WEBSITE OR ONLINE TOOL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish the website or online tool required under section 5702(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code, as added by this Act, and, to the extent practicable, the Secretary shall utilize existing online resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs for the purposes of such establishment.

SEC. 3. WARNINGS TO CLAIMANTS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS REGARDING UNRECOGNIZED REPRESENTATIVES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5901 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting "(a) IN GENERAL.—" before "Except";

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(b) WARNINGS ABOUT POTENTIAL PREDATORY PRACTICES.—(1) The Secretary shall ensure that, each time a claimant under a law administered by the Secretary logs in to a website or online tool of the Department, such website or online tool issues to the claimant, in plain language—

"(A) a warning about individuals who seek to act in violation of this chapter;

"(B) a link to an online tool of the Department through which the claimant may report such an individual;

"(C) a link to an online tool of the Department through which the claimant may search for a recognized agent, attorney, or other entity recognized by the Secretary for the preparation, presentation, or prosecution of any claim under laws administered by the Secretary; and

"(D) a link to a website or an online tool of the Department providing final decisions on discipline of agents, attorneys, and entities, described in subparagraph (C), by the Secretary for violations of this chapter.

"(2) The Secretary shall provide all information under paragraph (1) in the following languages:

"(A) English.

"(B) Spanish.

"(C) Tagalog.

"(D) The seven other languages most commonly spoken in the United States."

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out subsection (b) of such section, as added by subsection (a) of this section—

(1) after consulting with stakeholders (including veterans service organizations recognized under section 5902 of such title) regarding the wording of the warning under such subsection; and

(2) not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.