

make matters worse, the court anticipates the caseload in FY 2023 increasing even more due to the amount of cases generated from the PACT Act.

Quite simply, more cases before the board will lead to more denials, and more denials will lead to more appeals. The rapid growth of appeals will create an even larger backlog and leave veterans waiting longer periods of time—potentially years—for their cases to be resolved.

Since the court's expansion from five to seven permanent judges in 2011, appeals that have been filed with the court have more than doubled from just under 4,000 to just under 9,000 in 2020. Increasing the number of judges will provide the court with an opportunity to prevent a backlog and provide veterans with decisions in a timely manner.

The addition of this language to the bill is endorsed by the court itself.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote “yes” on H.R. 1530.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. CISCOMANI).

Mr. CISCOMANI. Madam Speaker, I thank Chairman BOST for yielding me this time to speak in support of Representative LUTTRELL's bill, the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2023.

I am grateful that my bill, the Veterans' Appeals Backlog Improvement Act, is included in this package. My bipartisan bill, which I introduced with Congressman MCGARVEY, is aimed at reducing wait times for our veterans with claims in front of the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

For too many of our veterans, they are waiting weeks, months, and sometimes even years to hear back. These delays create an incredible hurdle for our veterans who are trying to get a potentially life-changing decision.

While progress has been made in this area to older legacy VA appeals from veterans, the backlog is only increasing with newer claims stemming from the PACT Act.

Simply put, the Board of Veterans' Appeals, like all employers, is having issues recruiting employees and does not have enough staff to process the volume of cases. To address this shortage, my bill would create an internship program for law students at the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Additionally, it would create a 9-year pilot honors program at the VA for recruiting entry-level attorneys to work at the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

This bill makes major strides in improving and addressing the backlog and delays that our veterans see far too often and will help recruit much-needed staff.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to supporting this legislation and swift passage on the House floor.

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise as a strong supporter of H.R. 1530, the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2023, which, among other things, would amend title 38 of the United States Code to improve the requirement to publish disability benefit questionnaire forms of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans are some of America's most valued members of society.

These are people who served our nation in a time of need, people who risked their lives to protect our country.

Yet, it pains me to say that many of these same veterans who fought so bravely and risked so much in lands abroad have come back to their nation and have limited access to veterans' outreach programs, particularly in areas with large concentration of veterans.

There are approximately 18.5 million veterans in the United States.

Of those veterans, 1.5 million reside in Texas—the largest veteran population of any state.

This legislation is necessary because veterans have special needs that are unique from those faced by the rest of the population.

In 2015, I was proud to introduce the H.E.R.O.E.S. Act, which offers assistance and materials to help veterans transition from the battlefield to the workplace.

The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2023 is a step closer towards building a smooth transition for our nation's heroes.

H.R. 1530 helps to address the shortcomings in veteran assistance by increasing and extending assistance programs as well as scholarships through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2023 holds the Secretary of Veterans Affairs responsible to improve its support of veterans through outreach; reimbursement for medical disability-related travel; professional development activities; and access to Board of Veterans' Appeals telehearings.

This comprehensive program is needed if we are to fight this scourge that is a blight upon our nation.

Our nation's veterans did not risk their lives abroad so that they could come home and not receive the support and benefits they so desperately need.

We must all have outrage that so many of our nation's veterans live without critical support services; we must continue to proactively find ways to correct this injustice.

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. 1530, 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, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS AND CERTAIN OTHER VETERANS

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 112) to amend title 38, United States Code, to strengthen benefits for children of Vietnam veterans born with spina bifida, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 112

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

SECTION 1. BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS AND CERTAIN OTHER VETERANS.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—Section 1831 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (4) and (5), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraphs:

“(2) The term ‘covered child’ means a child who is eligible for health care and benefits under this chapter.

“(3) The term ‘covered veteran’ means an individual whose children are eligible for health care and benefits under this chapter.”.

(b) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter IV of chapter 18 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new sections:

“§ 1835. Advisory council

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish an advisory council on health care and benefits for covered children.

“(b) MEMBERSHIP.—The advisory council established under subsection (a) shall be composed of Federal employees.

“(c) DUTIES.—The advisory council established under subsection (a) shall solicit feedback from covered children and covered veterans on the health care and benefits provided under this chapter and communicate such feedback to the Secretary.

“§ 1836. Care and coordination teams

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish care and coordination teams for covered children.

“(b) OUTREACH.—A care and coordination team established under subsection (a) shall attempt to contact each covered child—

“(1) not less frequently than once every 180 days, to ensure the continued care of the child and assist with any changes in care needed due to a changed situation of the child; and

“(2) as soon as practicable after the identification of a condition listed in the report required by subsection (c).

“(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth a list of conditions that will trigger outreach to covered children under subsection (b)(2).

“§ 1837. Duration of health care and benefits provided

“The Secretary shall provide a covered child with health care and benefits under this chapter—

“(1) for the duration of the life of the child; and

“(2) notwithstanding any death of a parent of the child that precedes the death of the child.

“§ 1838. Biennial report

“Not less frequently than once every two years, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report setting forth the following:

“(1) The number of covered children receiving health care or benefits under this chapter as of the date on which the report is submitted.

“(2) The number of covered children for which the Department is paying for or providing a social worker as of such date.

“(3) Metrics on outreach conducted under section 1836(b) of this title.”.

(c) MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Under Secretary for Benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Under Secretary for Health of the Department shall enter into a memorandum of understanding—

(1) to better assist covered children (as defined in section 1831 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a)); and

(2) to establish conditions to be included in the report required by section 1836(c) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (b).

(d) IMPLEMENTATION.—

(1) ADVISORY COUNCIL.—Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish the advisory council required under section 1835 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (b).

(2) CARE AND COORDINATION TEAMS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish the care and coordination teams required under section 1836 of such title, as added by subsection (b).

(e) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 18 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new items:

“1835. Advisory council.

“1836. Care and coordination teams.

“1837. Duration of health care and benefits provided.

“1838. Biennial report.”.

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 S. 112.

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 Senator BRAUN of Indiana's bill, S. 112, which strengthens the spina bifida program at VA.

Children who are born to veterans exposed to Agent Orange and other herbicides have a higher risk of being born with this condition. Their condition can range from mild to severe, but children faced with this lifelong impact of spina bifida have many special needs.

Under current law, the VA Spina Bifida Health Care Benefits Program provides monetary and healthcare benefits to select children of Vietnam-era veterans and veterans of covered service in Korea or Thailand.

Senator BRAUN's commonsense legislation would improve the current pro-

gram by establishing care and coordination teams for these children to ensure they have the care and support and continued connections that they need for their entire lives.

Additionally, this bill would require VA to create an advisory council on healthcare and benefits for children living with spina bifida. This council would solicit feedback on healthcare, job training, and monetary benefits to ensure that these children have access to leading therapies and medical research.

For a lot of veterans' families, I know this legislation would make a real difference in their daily lives.

I thank Representative BAIRD for his work on this issue and for introducing the House companion to this bill, H.R. 3888.

I know these Members have heard from Hoosiers about this problem for many years, and I appreciate their efforts to help their constituents and other families.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting S. 112 today, 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 S. 112, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Senator BRAUN of Indiana.

This legislation aims to strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' administration of an existing program that provides healthcare benefits and compensation to children of Vietnam war veterans who were born with spina bifida. This bill is endorsed by the Vietnam Veterans of America.

Spina bifida is a birth defect that can cause paralysis, nerve damage, and bowel and bladder problems. Children born with spina bifida may receive benefits from VA if one of their biological parents is a veteran presumed to have been exposed to herbicides such as Agent Orange during the Vietnam war.

The program is jointly administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration, or VBA, and the Veterans Health Administration, or VHA. It provides a monetary allowance, healthcare coverage, and vocational training and rehabilitation. As of 2022, fewer than 1,000 beneficiaries were enrolled in the program.

According to a 2021 VA Office of Inspector General report examining the VA's administration of this program, VBA and VHA were not adequately communicating or sharing data on spina bifida program beneficiaries. This contributed to delays in some new beneficiaries being enrolled in healthcare and improper payments being sent to some beneficiaries after their deaths.

The inspector general also found the VA did not consistently conduct outreach to eligible and enrolled beneficiaries and did not provide effective case management services for the most

seriously disabled beneficiaries. In some cases, VA's call center agents provided inaccurate information about the spina bifida program or could not direct callers to reliable sources of information.

S. 112 directs VA to establish an advisory council for the spina bifida program, which would be responsible for soliciting feedback from covered children and veterans about the program's effectiveness. This legislation also requires VA to establish care coordination teams, which will contact beneficiaries at least once every 180 days to ensure they are accessing needed care. Finally, S. 112 would require VA to report to Congress every 2 years on the number of covered children receiving benefits, the number of children receiving care coordination, and the outcome of the outreach conducted to these populations.

Madam Speaker, I support this important piece of legislation, and I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing S. 112 to strengthen VA's benefits for children of Vietnam veterans born with spina bifida.

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

Mr. BOST. Madam 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, S. 112.

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, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

HIROSHI “HERSHEY” MIYAMURA VA CLINIC

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 475) to designate the clinic of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Gallup, New Mexico, as the Hiroshi “Hershey” Miyamura VA Clinic.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 475

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

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION OF HIROSHI “HERSHEY” MIYAMURA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLINIC.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Hiroshi “Hershey” Miyamura was born on October 6, 1925, in Gallup, New Mexico.

(2) A second generation Japanese American, Hershey Miyamura first served in the