

research entity to improve the notice letters VA sends to veterans and survivors who file claims for VA benefits.

VA is required to provide information throughout the VA claims process to veterans and their survivors who have filed claims for VA benefits.

However, at a recent oversight hearing, we heard from veterans and their advocates that VA's notice letters are difficult to understand, too long, filled with legal jargon, and contained information that is not relevant to a veteran's or survivor's overall claim.

These complex letters have caused veterans and survivors confusion and stress. Some have become so overwhelmed that they abandon their claims.

This is unacceptable. As a veteran myself, I have also received these complex letters. A veteran shouldn't have to be a Member of Congress or an attorney to understand his or her rights under the claims process.

H.R. 7816, as amended, would ensure that VA's notice letters do not discourage veterans from accessing the benefits they have earned.

This legislation would ensure that VA sends veterans and survivors understandable notice letters so that they can make informed decisions about their claims.

I thank the veterans service organizations for their support and help in drafting this bill.

I also thank Ranking Member TAKANO and his staff for working with Representative DUARTE and me to make the changes necessary to move this bill forward.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 7816, 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 to express my support for H.R. 7816, the Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act, as amended.

When a veteran applies for benefits at VA, the agency corresponds with that veteran at multiple points in the process regarding their claim. This communication is often through letters which can be densely laden with legal jargon and confusing information which makes it hard for the veteran to understand what is required of them or the benefits decision VA has arrived at.

Now, this can lead the veteran to miss important deadlines or fail to submit proper documentation which can ultimately lead to the rejection of their claims.

Now, VA has launched an internal review of these notice letters and has already redrafted many of them to be more direct and easier to understand. However, VA can also use some outside help in reviewing the literally thousands of different possible letters they might send a veteran.

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H.R. 7816 seeks to provide that assistance. Specifically, it mandates that VA

make its notice letters, documents that explain decisions on benefits, shorter, clearer, and easier for veterans and their families to understand.

This bill requires the VA to contract with a third party to assess and recommend improvements to these letters, which often contain complex legalese that can confuse veterans.

The bill also sets deadlines for action. The VA must contract with a federally funded research and development center, or FFRDC, to evaluate these communications within 30 days of the bill's enactment and submit its recommendation within 90 days. This effort aims to streamline the claims process and reduce the stress and confusion many veterans face when dealing with their benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 7816 and urge my colleagues to do the same, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. DUARTE), our colleague who is the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. DUARTE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, the Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act. I am proud that the House is considering my bill on the floor today and for the support of Democrats and Republicans so that veterans can obtain the benefits they have earned in service to our Nation.

I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) for his support of this bill and my Democrat co-lead, the gentleman from Illinois (Ms. BUDZINSKI), for joining me on this important legislation. This bill is a testament to what Congress can achieve when working across party lines.

Since coming to office, I have led several veterans' townhalls across California's Central Valley. One topic that continues to come up is the daunting challenge that our veterans, young and old, face when applying for and receiving benefits through the VA after their service to our Nation, and this is unacceptable.

Currently, when a veteran applies for benefits or files a claim with the VA, the VA responds in writing and often provides updates in writing.

At a Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing in March 2024, it became clear that the VA's effort to make these letters easy to understand, to guide veterans through the process, have failed. We learned the VA letters are often lengthy, packed with indecipherable legal jargon, sometimes omit crucial information needed to advance a claim, and can be over 20 pages long. These letters cause confusion, anxiety, and stress among our veterans, and some veterans are so overwhelmed that they give up on their claims entirely.

The Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act would require the VA to work with a federally funded research and development center to sim-

plify the notification letters for VA benefits, including disability compensation, disability ratings, health benefits, and education.

This bill would require the VA to contract with a FFRDC to assess the letters sent to veterans within 30 days. Within 90 days of receiving the assessment, the VA would be required to notify Congress and implement any recommendations from the FFRDC.

This legislation is supported by numerous veterans' groups across California, including the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, the National Organization of Veterans' Advocates, the American Legion, as well as the Stanislaus County Veterans Advisory Commission.

Their endorsements underscore the vital need for this reform. We must uphold our commitment to those who have bravely served our country. As a Congressman, I am always honored to help Central Valley veterans get their benefits. This bill is a step toward correcting the flawed VA claims process to help ensure our veterans get the care and benefits they earned from a grateful Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) for supporting the Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I ask all my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 7816, the Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, in closing, 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. 7816, 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.

COLONEL OLA LEE MIZE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLINIC

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5464) to name the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Guntersville, Alabama, as the "Colonel Ola Lee Mize Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5464

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

SECTION 1. NAME OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINIC, GUNTERSVILLE, ALABAMA.

The Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic located at 100 Judy Smith Drive, Guntersville, Alabama, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the "Colonel Ola Lee Mize Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic". Any reference to such clinic in any law, regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of the United States shall be considered to be a reference to the Colonel Ola Lee Mize Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic.

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 may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 5464.

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. 5464, a bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Guntersville, Alabama, as the Colonel Ola Lee Mize Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic.

Ola Mize was born on August 28, 1931, in Albertville, Alabama. Although he was initially rejected by the U.S. Army for being underweight, after much persistence, he joined the Army in 1950 and was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division.

When the Korean war broke out, rather than pursuing an education, Ola Mize decided to reenlist. On the night of June 10, 1953, Sergeant Mize's unit was defending an outpost, Outpost Harry, when they came under artillery fire. This fire was shortly followed by an assault by a battalion-sized force of Chinese troops, which quickly overran the Americans' position.

Sergeant Mize then took his rifle and began taking defensive action, killing around 40 enemy troops.

When nearly all the officers were casualties, he took the initiative to establish a defensive position. Sergeant Mize and his team went from bunker to bunker, firing at the enemy, confusing them into thinking Americans had a larger defense position than they actually did.

With all the chaos going on around him, he worked tirelessly to assist the wounded and put them into makeshift shelters away from enemy fire.

The next morning, Sergeant Mize led a counterattack, wiping out the remaining enemy.

For his action, Ola Mize was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Eisenhower on September 7, 1954. After receiving the Medal of Honor, he contin-

ued his service, being awarded the Silver Star for Valor and for his service in Vietnam.

Ola Mize retired from the Army as a colonel in 1981.

Stories of heroes like Colonel Mize should continue to be told to generations of Americans.

By naming the VA clinic in his honor, we will surely do just that. Colonel Mize's service to our country and his legacy will always be remembered, and I thank the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ADERHOLT), the sponsor, as well as the entire Alabama delegation for leading this effort.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5464, 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 to express my support for H.R. 5464, a bill to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Guntersville, Alabama, as the Colonel Ola Lee Mize Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic.

Colonel Mize's story is one of heroism and perseverance. His actions saved lives and helped turn the tide of conflict. I am glad to support this bill to honor his service.

Like many servicemembers, Mr. Mize joined the Army seeking to support his family. He was the son of Alabama sharecroppers and had to leave school in the ninth grade. Despite initially being rejected due to his small stature, he persevered and was accepted.

After a peacetime tour of duty, Mr. Mize reenlisted when the Korean war began.

As a member of the Army's Company K, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, and now a sergeant, Mr. Mize was stationed to defend a strategic posting known as Outpost Harry. His actions in this posting are nothing short of heroic.

He bravely answered the call to help a medic rescue an injured soldier at a listening post and brought him back to safety.

Sergeant Mize then fought his way to assist an American machine gun nest that had been overrun. On his way, he was blown down three separate times by artillery and grenade blasts, but he returned to his astounded men alive.

Sergeant Mize brought down as many as 65 enemy soldiers and helped rescue the outpost for the American forces. Of 56 Americans involved in the Outpost Harry fighting, only 8 survived, but Sergeant Mize's actions helped ensure that number was as high as it was.

In a testament to his loyalty to his men, Sergeant Mize initially refused the Medal of Honor when he was told that he would be honored with it, saying it should go to mark their bravery instead.

When he did finally accept it from President Eisenhower in 1954, he accepted it on behalf of his men.

Despite demonstrating more than enough valor for one lifetime, Colonel

Mize received a commission with the U.S. Special Forces and served four tours of duty, including three in Vietnam with the Army Green Berets.

In addition to his Medal of Honor, throughout his military career, he was awarded the Legion of Merit twice, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star five times, and the Purple Heart, among others.

After an assignment to the Special Forces School, he retired as a full colonel in 1981.

As a nation, we must remember Colonel Mize's sense of duty, loyalty to his men, and heroism. I can think of no better way to honor him.

Mr. Speaker, I support this important piece of legislation. I ask that my colleagues do the same, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ADERHOLT), the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. ADERHOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation, H.R. 5464, to rename the Guntersville, Alabama, community-based veterans outpatient clinic to the Colonel Ola Lee Mize Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic.

I was proud to introduce this bill in honor of Colonel Ola Lee Mize, a true American hero from Alabama's Fourth Congressional District, which I am honored to represent.

Ola Lee Mize was a native of Alabama's Fourth Congressional District. He was born and raised in Albertville, a town next to Guntersville, where this clinic is located.

In 1954, as it has been stated, Colonel Mize was awarded the Medal of Honor, which is the highest military honor, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower for his heroic actions in saving a wounded soldier and leading a successful military operation in defense of Outpost Harry, as it has been described by my colleagues.

According to reports, on that day, of the 56 Americans involved in the Outpost Harry battle, only 8 survived. Colonel Mize served his country with honor for more than 30 years in the United States Army.

Among his many other accomplishments were numerous additional deployments, including multiple tours in Vietnam as a Green Beret, rising to the rank of colonel and serving as commander of the Special Forces School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

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In addition to the Medal of Honor, Colonel Mize's other military declarations include two Legion of Merits, the Silver Star, five Bronze Stars, and the Purple Heart.

Following his retirement from the Army in 1982, Colonel Mize spent his remaining years in Gadsden, Alabama, in neighboring Etowah County, until he passed away in 2014.

He is survived by his wife, Betty Mize, and a daughter, Teresa Peterson, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Like I said before, Colonel Mize was a true American hero, and the people of Alabama's Fourth Congressional District are proud to call him our own. We will not forget the legacy he left behind, and neither should any American. That is why renaming the veterans clinic in Guntersville will honor Colonel Mize's service and inspire future generations of Alabamians.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues, Chairman BOST and Ranking Member TAKANO, for their work in bringing this legislation to the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 5464 to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Guntersville, Alabama, as the Colonel Ola Lee Mize Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of our 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. 5464.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RESTORING BENEFITS TO DEFRAUDED VETERANS ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4190) to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to repay the estates of deceased beneficiaries for certain benefits paid by the Secretary and misused by fiduciaries of such beneficiaries, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4190

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 "Restoring Benefits to Defrauded Veterans Act".

SEC. 2. REISSUANCE BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF ESTATES OF DECEASED BENEFICIARIES FOR CERTAIN BENEFITS PAID BY THE SECRETARY AND MISUSED BY FIDUCIARIES.

Section 6107 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (c) and (d) as subsections (d) and (e), respectively;

(2) by inserting after subsection (b) the following new subsection (c):

"(c) REISSUANCE OF AMOUNTS IN THE CASE OF A DECEASED BENEFICIARY.—(1) If a beneficiary described in subsection (a) predeceases a payment under subsection (a) or (b), the Secretary shall pay such benefits, subject to paragraph

(2), to an individual or entity in accordance with section 5121 of this title.

"(2) The Secretary may not make a payment under this subsection to a fiduciary who misused benefits of the beneficiary."; and

(3) in subsection (e), as redesignated, by striking "subsection (a) or (b)" and inserting "this section".

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 may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4190, 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. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4190, as amended.

This bill was introduced by Representative TRONE. It ensures that no fiduciary who steals a veteran's earned VA benefits can profit from their misuse if the veteran passes.

Mr. Speaker, I support the bill wholeheartedly, 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 to express my support for H.R. 4190, the Restoring Benefits to Defrauded Veterans Act, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, it is an unfortunate reality that veterans, especially elderly veterans, find themselves as prime targets for fraud. It is even more unfortunate that oftentimes this fraud is perpetuated by those closest to the veteran, sometimes even family and friends who are tasked with assisting that veteran.

Thankfully, VA has a set of policies and procedures for uncovering, investigating, and prosecuting that fraud, which includes making restitution to the veteran.

Earlier this year, we passed H.R. 4016, the Veteran Fraud Reimbursement Act, introduced by Representative GERRY CONNOLLY, to help expedite that process. I urge the Senate to quickly take up that bill, as well.

Sadly, though, it sometimes happens that the veteran who was the victim of this fraud passes away before VA is able to make restitution, but VA is currently barred from making the estate of that beneficiary whole.

H.R. 4190, introduced by Representative DAVID TRONE, seeks to create a set of procedures for VA to follow to restore or reinstate benefits for veterans who were defrauded but unfortunately die before VA can compensate them.

More importantly, for those veterans who may have been defrauded by a family member, it also prevents VA

from repaying benefits to anyone who may have been a party to the fraud, regardless of whether they may have been named in the veteran's will as an heir.

Mr. Speaker, we owe our veterans and their survivors all the protections we can possibly afford them through the law. H.R. 4190 offers one more avenue to ensure veterans are receiving the benefits they have earned in spite of those who seek to defraud them.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this measure, and I encourage the Senate to quickly pass this bill, as well.

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

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I have no speakers on this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. TRONE), my good friend who is the author of H.R. 4190. He currently serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the Budget Committee. He is also a former member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. TRONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge a "yes" vote on my bill, the Restoring Benefits to Defrauded Veterans Act.

Today, we must remember that the courageous men and women who have dedicated their lives to defend our country and our freedoms still need us. My bill addresses this longstanding issue affecting millions of veterans: fraud.

Just last year, the Federal Trade Commission estimated \$477 million was stolen from veterans, military personnel, and their spouses. This is a \$63 million, or 15 percent, increase from the year before.

Under current law, if a veteran passes away before their case is resolved, their family cannot be reimbursed for lost dollars. That is unacceptable.

My bill, the Restoring Benefits to Defrauded Veterans Act, would help the veterans and their families reclaim these defrauded dollars and get them access to the money that they earned. Specifically, the legislation requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reissue the misused benefits to a beneficiary's estate in cases where the beneficiary passed before the reissuance.

We must ensure that veterans and their families are able to recapture any lost benefits they were scammed out of. It is just the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge a "yes" vote.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 4190, the Restoring Benefits to Defrauded Veterans Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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