

it find? Exactly what our veterans had been saying all along. Marines who served in Vietnam were 30 percent more likely to die from this disease than those who served elsewhere.

Still, the VA refuses to acknowledge this as a service-connected condition. Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable.

We have seen this pattern before with Agent Orange, the blue water Navy, and now, again, with liver fluke: Delay, denial, deflection.

In response, I introduced H.R. 4424, the Vietnam Veterans Liver Fluke Cancer Study Act, a bipartisan bill requiring the VA, in partnership with the CDC, to conduct a nationwide study and finally confront the truth: Bile duct cancer caused by the liver fluke parasite is a service-related illness.

Since the VA won't act, Congress must because our Vietnam veterans deserve more than parades and speeches. They deserve answers, care, and our action.

Mr. Speaker, every day we wait, more veterans die without the care they deserve. Let's not repeat the failures of the past.

Mr. Chairman, I thank Chairman Bost for his support of this legislation. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in standing with those who once stood for us. They answered the call. Now, it is our turn.

□ 1700

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 586, the Vietnam Veterans Liver Fluke Cancer Study Act, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NORMAN). 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. 586, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas 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.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION FOR VETERANS CLAIMS ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1039) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek to enter into an agreement with a federally funded research and development center for an assessment of notice letters that the Secretary sends to claimants for benefits under laws administered by the

Secretary, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1039

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 "Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act".

SEC. 2. INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF NOTICES THAT THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SENDS TO CLAIMANTS.

(a) AGREEMENT.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall seek to enter into an agreement with an FFRDC for an assessment of notices that the Secretary sends to claimants.

(b) ASSESSMENT.—An FFRDC that enters to an agreement under subsection (a) shall submit to the Secretary a written assessment of such notices. The assessment shall include the following:

(1) The determination of the FFRDC, made in consultation with covered entities, whether each such notice may be feasibly altered to reduce paper consumption by, and costs to, the Federal Government.

(2) The recommendations of the FFRDC regarding how the Secretary may make such notices clearer to claimants, better organized, and more concise.

(c) REPORT; IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 90 days after the Secretary receives the assessment under subsection (b), the Secretary shall—

(1) submit to the Committees on Veterans Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a copy of such assessment; and

(2) implement the recommendations in the assessment that are in compliance with the laws administered by the Secretary.

(d) DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall complete the implementation of such recommendations pursuant to subsection (c)(2) by not later than one year after the date on which the Secretary commences such implementation.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term "FFRDC" means a federally funded research and development center.

(2) The term "covered entities" includes—

(A) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs;

(B) an expert in laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs;

(C) a veterans service organization recognized under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code;

(D) an entity that advocates for veterans; and

(E) an entity that advocates for the survivors of veterans.

(3) The terms "claimant" and "notice" have the meanings given such terms in section 5100 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN LIMITS ON PAYMENTS OF PENSION.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "November 30, 2031" and inserting "December 31, 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 may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1039, 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. 1039, as amended.

This bill was introduced by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BARRETT), my friend and fellow veteran, and I am proud to be a cosponsor.

H.R. 1039, as amended, would require VA to contract with a research entity to improve the notice letters VA sends to veterans and survivors who file claims for VA benefits. The VA provides veterans and their survivors information throughout the VA claims process. It is important for these notice letters to be understandable so that the veterans and survivors know their rights and how to navigate the claims process.

I am pleased to see that the VA has recently improved some of their notice letters. However, hundreds of other VA letters are still difficult to understand.

At a recent hearing, we heard from veterans' advocates that the VA needs help from outside experts, given the huge number of letters that VA must draft. We still hear from veterans that many of VA's letters are too long, filled with legal jargon, and contain information that is not relevant to their claims.

These complex letters sometimes cause veterans and survivors so much confusion and stress that they just abandon their claims.

As a veteran myself, I continue to receive long and complex letters. You shouldn't have to be a Member of Congress or an attorney to understand how the VA claims process works.

H.R. 1039, as amended, would ensure that none of VA's notice letters discourage veterans from accessing the benefits they have earned. Representative BARRETT's bill would ensure that VA sends veterans and survivors understandable notice letters so they can make informed decisions about their claims. Further, this modernization bill is supported by the administration.

Mr. Speaker, I thank our veterans service organizations for their support of this commonsense bill. I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 1039, 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. 1039, the Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act.

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 that 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. 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.

Under the Biden administration, VA already launched an internal review of these notice letters and had already redrafted many of them to be more direct and easier to understand, but VA could also use some outside help in reviewing the literally thousands of different possible letters they might send to a veteran.

H.R. 1039 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 legal language that confuses 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 recommendations 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, in spite of my support for the substance of this measure, I want to raise concern with the majority's choice to offset the cost of this bill by continuing to divert pension payments from the oldest and most sick veterans in VA's system. I understand that this offset has been used in the past and has existed in some form since the 1960s. However, given that this administration, with the enabling of a feckless Republican-led Congress, has been working overtime to hollow out VA, we must rethink whether or not it is appropriate to continue its use.

Aside from the moral failing of cutting one veterans' benefit to pay for another, VA's pension programs are designed specifically to support the poorest and sickest veterans and their survivors. Therefore, this continued reduction in pension payments poses real risks when the other services these veterans might need to fall back on are also being cut.

Mr. Speaker, again, I support the substance of this bill, but I think we should have a very serious conversation about the majority's choice to perpetuate cutting veterans' pensions, and I believe that we should include this item in any negotiations with the Senate before this bill becomes law.

Mr. Speaker, with those concerns in mind, I support this legislation and ask my colleagues to do the same. I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. BARRETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my very first piece

of legislation that I introduced as a Member of Congress, H.R. 1039, the Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act.

This bipartisan bill, which I am proud to lead with Chairman BOST and Representative BUDZINSKI, the ranking member of the subcommittee that I lead on Chairman BOST's committee, will make it easier for veterans to access the care and benefits they have earned by making significant improvements to our overly complicated claims process.

Mr. Speaker, you have already heard from other Members today about issues with veterans filing claims and running into problems with forms, legalese, bureaucratic speak, and things that are not easily understood. I can tell you, I personally have seen this myself in applications and interfacing I have had with the VA and challenges you get when you receive things in the mail. It is hard to determine whether this is an update on the claim that I have filed, a resolution to that claim, or seeking more information, or is it simply a delay saying that they don't have a resolution to the claim yet? It can be very difficult to figure that out, especially if you have multiple claims within the same packet.

When a veteran files a claim, it means they need help, yet too often they receive long, confusing letters full of legal jargon that leaves them with more questions than answers, ultimately leading them to call into a claims center or a helpline, which overburdens that and slows down the overall claims process.

This is unacceptable. Claims letters should be the catalyst to care and benefits and not the obstacle.

That is where my bill comes in. H.R. 1039 requires the VA to make these notices clear, concise, and easy to understand while also streamlining the Department's overall communication with our veterans.

As you heard already, it requires the VA to partner with an outside agency, not the bureaucrats within the VA, to make these communications easier and more streamlined for veterans to understand. Often, when you are working within the industry, it can be very difficult to put yourself in the position of those receiving these letters to understand what would be best absorbed by them.

Our veterans serve the United States military with honor. They shouldn't need a lawyer or specially trained advocate to explain a claims letter to them.

When I was elected to the State legislature in Michigan 10 years ago, I became the only Iraq war veteran in the entire Michigan House of Representatives. I worked closely with my Federal Members of Congress to help veterans obtain their benefits.

I maintained then that if I were ever in a position to make the process more streamlined and easier to understand, I would commit to doing that. This very

first bill in Congress makes good on that commitment. I am proud to offer that today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and the rest of the Chamber for taking up this bill for consideration. It is time to give America's heroes and their families a clear and efficient claims process that actually works for them. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill that would do just that.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. BUDZINSKI), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Technology Modernization.

Ms. BUDZINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act, bipartisan legislation that would simplify the Department of Veterans Affairs' correspondence for our Nation's heroes. I am proud to lead this bill with Chairman TOM BARRETT, who I serve with on the House Veterans' Affairs Technology Modernization Subcommittee.

Every day, my office hears from veterans who are struggling to get the benefits that they earned because of overcomplicated documents and bureaucratic red tape. Correspondence from the VA regarding benefits decisions, often called notice letters, usually contain complex legal jargon, which can be confusing, frustrating, and stressful for veterans and their families.

The Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act is a commonsense solution to this problem. This legislation would require the VA to study and provide recommendations for simplifying VA notice letters. The goal is to make these letters shorter, easier to understand, and more comprehensive so veterans have the information they need for the next step in their claims process.

Our veterans have sacrificed so much in service to our Nation, and we must do more to improve access to the critical services they need and deserve. Right now, our veterans are facing great uncertainty and anxiety. This bill would make a real change in their lives. We owe it to them now more than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this important bill.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I join with the ranking member and ask all of 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 Illinois (Mr. BOST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1039, 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.

□ 1715

DELIVER FOR VETERANS ACT

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 877) to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide or assist in providing a vehicle adapted for operation by a disabled individual to certain eligible persons, by paying expenses associated with the delivery of such vehicle, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 877

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 "Deliver for Veterans Act".

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PAY COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DELIVERY OF AN ADAPTIVE VEHICLE TO AN ELIGIBLE PERSON.

Section 3902(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "by paying the total purchase price of the automobile or other conveyance" and inserting "by paying the total purchase price of the automobile or other conveyance, and the total shipping price to deliver the automobile or other conveyance to the veteran".

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN LIMITATION OF PENSION PAYMENTS.

Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking "November 30, 2031" and inserting "March 31, 2032".

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. 877, 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. 877, as amended, offered by my friend and colleague, the delegate from Guam (Mr. MOYLAN).

H.R. 877, as amended, would allow the VA to pay for the shipping price of specially adapted vehicles for disabled veterans. Currently, service-connected disabled veterans who are unable to drive due to their disability can work with the VA to get a vehicle that is adapted for their use.

This is an important program and helps disabled veterans in their daily lives by allowing them to drive to medical appointments, to the grocery store, and to work. Unfortunately, shipping costs are not currently covered, creating a financial burden on veterans who want to make their lives better.

While this might not be an issue for some veterans, other veterans are unable to get a vehicle adapted for them because there are no resources capable of making the vital modifications nearby.

Delegate MOYLAN's bill would correct this issue by including shipping costs in the \$24,000 the VA provides to support veterans who are having trouble accessing the resources they need for any adapted vehicle.

In a time when bureaucracy is getting in the way of doing what is best for our veterans, Congress must intervene to eliminate the red tape and provide the necessary assistance our veterans deserve.

This bill would do just that and would save hundreds of dollars for disabled veterans across the country. It would also ensure that the disabled veterans have the ability to get to a job and earn money to support themselves and their families.

I thank the DAV and the VFW for supporting this bill last Congress and for their tireless work on the Hill advocating for this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 877, 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. 877, the Deliver for Veterans Act. This bill would make it easier for disabled veterans to obtain the adaptive automobiles they are entitled to through their service-connected disability. If signed into law, this bill could save veterans tens of thousands of dollars on shipping costs of vehicles.

Two Congresses ago, we passed the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act, a bill authored by Ranking Member MIKE LEVIN and Representative LIZZIE FLETCHER, which expanded the adaptive auto benefit for veterans, allowing them to get a new vehicle if 10 years have passed since last using the benefit.

This bill from Representative MOYLAN builds upon that work by simplifying the process for veterans who require their adaptive vehicle to be shipped. This includes veterans who live in areas such as Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Again, I support the substance of this bill, but I think we should have a very serious conversation about the majority's choice to perpetuate cutting veterans' pensions. I believe that we should include this item in any negotiations with the Senate before this bill becomes law.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues in the House and Senate to support this

bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the delegate from Guam (Mr. MOYLAN).

Mr. MOYLAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, H.R. 877, the Deliver for Veterans Act, a critical piece of legislation addressing challenges faced by veterans in remote areas, including Guam.

As the Representative of a region where the unavailability of adaptive vehicles poses a significant barrier to our veterans, I urge my colleagues to support this essential measure.

Veterans in remote districts across our Nation face immense challenges because of the lack of access to adaptive vehicles. These vehicles are essential for veterans with disabilities to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

Unfortunately, the high cost of shipping to remote areas has created an insurmountable obstacle for many of our veterans. They are forced to cover the expensive shipping fee, a cost that should not be borne by those who have already sacrificed so much for our country.

Whether it is for medical appointments, running errands, or simply visiting family and friends, adaptive vehicles are a lifeline for veterans in Guam. H.R. 877 will provide much-needed relief to our veterans, ensuring that they can access the support and services they rightfully deserve without facing financial hardships.

Let us stand together in solidarity with our veterans in Guam and all areas around the world and ensure that they receive the support they need and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I implore each and every one of my esteemed colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 877, the Deliver for Veterans Act.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 877, the Deliver for Veterans Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT). 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. 877, 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.

FAIRNESS FOR SERVICEMEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES ACT OF 2025

Mr. BOST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill