

VA, what party controls Congress, or who occupies the White House.

I thank Congressman ROSE, a combat veteran, for leading the fight against this tragic national public health crisis, and I want to commend him for his leadership and for writing this important legislation that will ensure Congress has all the data it needs to truly understand and reduce veteran suicide.

I encourage my colleagues to join me in voting “yes” on this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2340, as amended, the FIGHT Veteran Suicides Act.

This bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to report to the local congressional delegation, as well as to the committee, whenever a veteran attempts or dies by suicide in or on the grounds of a VA facility.

We have all heard the heartbreaking stories of veterans who have died by suicide on VA campuses, including five veteran suicide deaths in the last several weeks alone. There is no indication that these events represent an increase in the rate of suicide among servicemembers and veterans, but they are particularly poignant because they occur so close to help and appear to be an indictment on the healthcare system that was created to support them.

To be clear, suicide is a national public health crisis that is not unique to VA, the military, or veterans. However, we must pay careful attention to the incidents of suicide among those who have served and sacrificed on our behalf and do everything we can to point those in crisis to the resources they need to recover from the traumas and live long, full, healthy lives.

I am grateful to Congressman MAX ROSE from New York for sponsoring this bill, which will allow us to learn all we can about the suicides that occur on VA campuses so that we can take action that may save other lives in the future.

I encourage all Members to support this much-needed piece of legislation.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I, too, ask my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 2340, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2340, 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.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2019

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1200) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2019, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill. The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1200

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 “Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2019, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2019, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—Each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2019, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 2(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) are required to be published by reason of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act during fiscal year 2020.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Tennessee (DAVID P. ROE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1200.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, H.R. 1200, the Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019 would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the rates of disability compensation for service-connected veterans and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of veterans, effective December 1, 2019.

Now, this bill would also increase these rates by the same percentage as the percentage by which Social Security benefits are increased effective December 1, 2019, and require that VA publish the increased rates in the Federal Register.

To me, the actual cost-of-living adjustment to veterans’ benefits, otherwise known as COLA, is much more than a rate adjustment tied to inflation. In reality, it is a quality-of-life guarantee in retirement years, especially for veterans suffering with service-connected disabilities and ailments.

It also comes with the assurance for veterans that their survivors will not see a steady decline in benefits if the economy changes and costs rise after they are gone. This guarantee is a great source of comfort for veterans as they age. I know this because they tell me this everywhere I go.

The yearly COLA increase is a recognition and appreciation of a grateful nation of the service and sacrifice of those who volunteer to wear the uniform of our country.

Participating in this gesture of appreciation is one of the most rewarding responsibilities of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. As chairman, I am honored to be leading this effort to say thank you.

I want to recognize the work of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee chair, ELAINE LURIA, and ranking member, MIKE BOST, for sponsoring H.R. 1200 and for bringing this bill to the floor today.

I am pleased that we are considering this bill early this year so veterans will not be concerned about its passage by the December 1 deadline.

I wholeheartedly support H.R. 1200 and urge all my colleagues to do so as well.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1200, the Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019.

In keeping with the traditions of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, this bill was introduced by Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee Chair ELAINE LURIA and Ranking Member MIKE BOST. I appreciate their commitment to ensuring that veterans and their families can afford living expenses when prices go up.

H.R. 1200 authorizes a cost-of-living increase for veterans and their families next year if Social Security recipients receive an increase.

To put this in perspective, in 1975, a veteran who was rated totally disabled would receive at least \$655 in monthly disability compensation. Because of the COLAs that Congress has passed for decades, totally disabled veterans now receive \$2,907 in tax-free monthly disability compensation, an increase of 443 percent over the years. As you can see, H.R. 1200 is necessary to prevent inflation from eroding the value of veteran and survivor benefits.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 1200, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. LURIA), who is my good friend and the chairwoman of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee and also a cosponsor of H.R. 1200.

Mrs. LURIA. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my bipartisan bill, H.R. 1200, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019.

In Congress, I have vowed to keep our Nation's veterans at the top of my mind, and I plan to deliver on that promise through this critical piece of legislation.

I represent a coastal Virginia district with eight major military installations, including Naval Station Norfolk, the largest naval station in the United States, so veterans are clearly a critical part of my constituency, just as they are honored members of every congressional district across America.

Our veterans put their lives on the line and are deployed far from home to keep America safe. As a 20-year Navy veteran myself, I am proud to bring a bill to the floor that would eliminate the erosions of benefits they earned in service to our country.

The Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act would recognize that the benefits we provide our veterans need to be modernized and increased the same way that Social Security has raised benefits to meet cost-of-living increases.

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My bill enhances benefits for wartime disability compensation, compensation for dependents, clothing allowance, dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses, and dependency and indemnity compensation to children.

We have seen costs for disability care, clothing, and childcare increase over the years, and it is vital that we

continue to provide benefits that actually meet the demands that our veterans see on the ground.

A cost-of-living increase would aid veterans, their families, and their survivors to help maintain the value of their benefits against inflation. Without consistent increases, veterans and their families may not be able to have a consistent quality of life into their later years.

Providing quality benefits to our veterans and their dependents can change lives, and Congress must honor the commitment to those American heroes who served in harm's way so that we can live in peace at home.

I thank my colleagues on the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee and my ranking member, MIKE BOST, for being a cosponsor of this legislation, and I urge swift House passage so that we can do our part to push this into law and help our Nation's veterans.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST), ranking member of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs and a marine veteran.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, this is a must-pass bill.

I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for moving this piece of legislation forward as well.

Many disabled veterans and their families depend on their veterans benefits to pay for things like food and medicine. For many of these veterans, these payments are a lifeline. In some cases, the benefits may even be the only income that the veteran has.

It is only fair that we ensure that the benefits paid to veterans who were injured during military service do not lose value because of inflation. If we don't, it could become hard for people who were injured while serving our Nation in uniform to keep their heads above water.

I want to thank Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee Chair LURIA for her introduction of the bill.

Madam Speaker, this bill has always enjoyed bipartisan support. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1200.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Madam Speaker, I encourage everyone to support this commonsense bill.

I think my last duty assignment was probably in Mrs. LURIA's district, Fort Eustis, Virginia. That is where my last 9 months in the Army was.

I was raised in a military town: Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Clarksville, Tennessee. I grew up around the military, and I just cannot thank them enough.

This is the very least we can do for our disabled veterans, to give them a COLA which will, hopefully, make their lives a little bit better and thank them for their service.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all Members to support this legislation,

and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I, too, join my ranking member in asking all of our colleagues to pass H.R. 1200.

I thank Chairwoman LURIA and Ranking Member BOST of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs for their hard work.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1200, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1200.

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.

VETERANS' CARE QUALITY TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2372) to direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct an assessment of all memoranda of understanding and memoranda of agreement between Under Secretary of Health and non-Department of Veterans Affairs entities relating to suicide prevention and mental health services, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2372

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 "Veterans' Care Quality Transparency Act".

SEC. 2. COMPTROLLER GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING AND MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN UNDER SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND NON-DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ENTITIES RELATING TO SUICIDE PREVENTION AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

(a) ASSESSMENT.—Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct an assessment of the effectiveness of all memoranda of understanding and memoranda of agreement entered into by the Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Health and a non-Department of Veterans Affairs entity relating to—

(1) suicide prevention activities and outreach; and

(2) the provision or coordination of mental health services during the five-year period preceding the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) CONTENTS OF ASSESSMENT.—The assessment required by subsection (a) shall include an assessment of—

(1) the size of the catchment area of each such entity;

(2) the staffing structures of such entities;

(3) any accreditation or licensure any such entity has obtained in relation to the services the entity provides;

(4) any variances in the subpopulations of veterans served by such entities;

(5) any limitations any such entity may face in carrying out its obligations under the memorandum of understanding or memorandum of agreement;