

Even with outdated facilities, the Annals of Internal Medicine found in a 2018 report that VA provides better care than private options in most cases. That is right. VA provides better care, even though they are working from outdated facilities. What would those findings look like if VA was competing with a modern infrastructure?

Mr. Speaker, not only does VA provide better care, veterans want to use VA-delivered healthcare. A survey conducted by the Veterans of Foreign Wars found that 92 percent of veterans who participated in the survey responded that fixing VA facilities was the best way to improve VA's delivery of healthcare to veterans.

Ninety percent of respondents who use VA stated they would recommend VA healthcare to another veteran.

It is clear that veterans, given the option, want to preserve the VA healthcare system and feel that it is a quality option for veterans to receive care.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I support S. 3414. I thank Senator MORAN, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for prioritizing and passing this legislation.

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

□ 0930

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 3414, the VA Major Medical Facility Authorization Act. This bill is sponsored by my good friends on the other side of the Capitol, Chairman JERRY MORAN and Ranking Member JON TESTER of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

This bill would authorize the construction of the Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facility projects in Kentucky, California, New York, and Puerto Rico. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the value of the VA healthcare system in serving not just our Nation's veterans, which is the Department's foremost responsibility, but also in supporting all Americans during times of crisis.

The seven projects that would be authorized in this legislation have been requested by the administration in VA's most recent budget submission. They would increase access to high-quality care and services to veterans of all ages and eras. It would also ensure that VA is better able to fulfill the Department's important service training, research, and emergency response missions.

Mr. Speaker, to associate myself with the chairman's remarks, Abraham Lincoln would recognize the VA medical center in my hometown, which was authorized right after the Civil War and opened in 1903 as an Old Soldiers' Home and now is a first-class VA medical center.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge all of my colleagues to join in supporting this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote "yes" on passage of this important legislation, S. 3414, 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, S. 3414.

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.

MODIFYING PAY LIMITATION FOR CERTAIN HIGH-LEVEL EMPLOYEES AND OFFICERS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 3084) to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the limitation on pay for certain high-level employees and officers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3084

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

SECTION 1. MODIFICATION OF PAY LIMITATION FOR CERTAIN HIGH-LEVEL EMPLOYEES AND OFFICERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) MODIFICATION.—Section 7404(d) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting "and except for individuals appointed under sections 7401(4) and 7306 of this title," after "section 7457 of this title,".

(b) WAIVERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may waive the limitation described in section 7404(d) of such title, as in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act, on the amount of basic pay payable to individuals appointed under section 7401(4) or 7306 of such title for basic pay payable during the period—

(A) beginning on November 1, 2010; and

(B) ending on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) FORM.—The Secretary shall prescribe the form for requesting a waiver under paragraph (1).

(3) TREATMENT OF WAIVER.—A decision not to grant a waiver under paragraph (1) shall not be treated as an adverse action and is not subject to further appeal, third-party review, or judicial review.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on S. 3084, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 3084, as amended, a bill to modify the limitation on pay for certain high-level employees and officers of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

This legislation retroactively authorizes VA to waive a limitation for basic pay for SES-equivalent employees employed at VA dating back to November 1, 2010. These are senior-level clinicians who oversee critical VA medical operations at the VA Central Office and in Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

Due to a conflicting interpretation of the law, these senior-level employees were overpaid by VA for almost 10 years. VA did not notify Congress that it had been interpreting the pay cap in its statute as not applying to these employees until this year.

Mr. Speaker, the Office of Management and Budget and Office of Personnel Management have said this is an issue that affects approximately 40 senior VA employees, some of whom play critical support roles in VA's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, without this legislative fix, these employees, through no fault of their own, will be liable for a salary overpayment, plus any benefits tied to the salary, to include employee and agency retirement fund contributions.

While VA could request a waiver of this debt on behalf of the employees under the law, a waiver will not completely address the negative financial effects these employees will experience. Their retirement and Thrift Savings Plan matching debt cannot be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, VA has been making up the difference between the \$156,000 cap and the rate of pay that has been received by the affected employees with bonuses, which do not count toward employee and agency retirement fund contributions and other Federal benefits.

Since VA has faced significant challenges hiring qualified healthcare leaders in the past, removing any remaining barriers to ensuring VA can recruit and retain senior clinicians is crucial.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support S. 3084, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 3084, as amended. This bill is sponsored by Chairman JERRY MORAN and Ranking Member JON TESTER of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and I am grateful for them for introducing it.

S. 3084, as amended, would correct an error in existing law that impedes employees serving in Senior Executive Service-equivalent positions in the Department of Veterans Health Administration from receiving their full salaries. Congress passed legislation in 2010 to ensure that the individuals in those positions would be appropriately compensated for their work.

However, VA discovered a technical error in that legislation just last year that, unless corrected, would result in those hardworking men and women instead having their salaries significantly reduced. It would also result in VA having to issue and collect debts for current and former employees who served in these high-level positions over the last decade. That is certainly not what Congress intended.

The VA employees who are impacted by this issue are serving in mission-critical positions across the VA healthcare system. Many of them have been working around the clock, leading VA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They are responsible for ensuring that veterans and VA employees are safe and well cared for and that VA is able to fulfill the Department's fourth mission obligation to support the national response to this crisis.

They and their colleagues have performed incredibly lifesaving work during the pandemic. I commend them for their efforts, which I know will continue to be critical in the weeks and months ahead. Making them whole by passing this bill today is the least we can do for them in return.

I am glad to be back at work in our Nation's Capitol, as our constituents always intended for us to be, and to support this bill today as a small token of appreciation to the VA leaders who are steering the Department through the crisis on behalf of our Nation's veterans and families.

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

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

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time. I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

I would like to start, since Monday was Memorial Day, to associate myself with the remarks of Mr. LAMALFA from California about Sam Johnson, one of our colleagues.

Sam Johnson is one of the reasons I am so proud to have served in this body. Sam was one of the most incredible human beings I have ever met. He spent over 40 months in solitary confinement, chained to a concrete floor. This man came back to this country as a Wounded Warrior, but he did not let that stop him. He went ahead and had a very fulfilling life and really affected many of us in ways Sam will never know.

I can remember seeing Sam on this floor. Sam was so beat up in his captivity that he would take his voting

card and have to step up, raise up on his toes to put his card—I would get tears in my eyes watching him—put his card in that voting machine over there to cast his vote.

We owe Sam and many veterans like him who have given the ultimate sacrifice to this great country a debt that we can never pay back.

I served at the same time that Sam did. I was in the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea but I did not serve in Vietnam, and I can't thank those men and women enough.

To my colleagues, my brothers and sisters, welcome home.

Mr. Speaker, before I yield back, I would like to take a moment to thank Chairman TAKANO and the leadership on both sides of the aisle for bringing these three important bills to the floor today. Our actions show that, like many other Americans, we can continue to do our jobs and our part to reopen the country and our economy in a safe and productive way.

While I am pleased that we are debating these bills today, I am disappointed that H.R. 3504, the Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019, was not included on today's agenda. H.R. 3504 is a bipartisan bill introduced by Representatives GUS BILIRAKIS and MIKE LEVIN that would make important improvements to the specially adaptive housing program that helps severely injured veterans adapt their homes.

The bill would also require important changes to the administration of VA work-study benefits and make improvements to the GI Bill.

The bill has already passed the House and has now come back over from the Senate. It represents a four corners bicameral agreement, and the bill is strongly supported by our veterans service organizations.

I hope in the coming days we can pass the bill and send it to President Trump's desk as soon as possible. During this difficult time, we should be doing all we can to help support severely disabled veterans and student veterans.

I thank the chairman. During this time that we have been at home with our constituents and with our families and really confined, we tried to continue to work, and I want to commend the chairman on being able to do this.

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

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

I associate myself with the remarks about the memory of our recently departed former Member. Of course, all of our Vietnam veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice but also those who came back from that service in that war, we all owe a debt of gratitude toward them.

I recall my own uncle, who, unfortunately, committed suicide. I remember coming back from school and learning that he had committed suicide. We

have so many of our Vietnam-era veterans who are extremely vulnerable because they have underlying conditions. I know that many of our veterans have been playing leadership roles among their neighbors to lead their neighbors in responding to COVID-19, the novel coronavirus.

I thank all of those veterans across our country for leading that effort. Coming off of the Memorial Day weekend, it is certainly always a poignant holiday that we observe in recognition of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

With regard to S. 3084, I urge my colleagues to pass it. It is the right thing to do. We need to do right by the senior leaders of the VA. We need to make sure that we continue to attract the very best to serve our veterans in the service of the Veterans Department.

Mr. Speaker, 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, S. 3084, 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.

□ 0945

SMALL BUSINESS TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING FOR THE UNDERBANKED AND TAXPAYERS AT HOME ACT

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6782) to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to submit a report on recipients of assistance under the paycheck protection program and the economic injury disaster loan 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. 6782

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 "Small Business Transparency and Reporting for the Underbanked and Taxpayers at Home Act" or the "TRUTH Act".

SEC. 2. REPORT.

Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall make publicly available, in an online format that is sortable and searchable for key words and downloadable (to the extent technically practicable), the following information with respect to the paycheck protection program and the economic injury disaster loan program:

(1) An identification of each recipient of assistance in an amount greater than \$2,000,000 from funds appropriated under the CARES Act (Public Law 116-136) or the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act (Public Law 116-139).