

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT R. TIPTON (CO-03)

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

FULL COMMITTEE LEGISLATIVE HEARING

JUNE 20, 2019

Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Roe, and distinguished Committee Members, thank you for considering H.R. 485, the *Veterans Reimbursement for Emergency Ambulance Services Act* or *VREASA*, during today's legislative hearing.

Costs associated with emergency ambulance services to non-VA facilities are a huge financial burden for our nation's veterans, and one that those who have earned healthcare benefits through their service to this nation should not be required to pay.

VREASA is bipartisan legislation intended to address Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) regulations that could unfairly burden veterans with the costs of emergency ambulance services to non-VA facilities.

Historically, some veterans have been denied their reimbursement claims for emergency ambulance services to non-VA facilities primarily because of how the VA was interpreting its regulations. Unfortunately, the VA's interpretation would leave these veterans to pay for these ambulance bills out of pocket. VREASA would clarify that veterans' expenses for emergency ambulance services to non-VA facilities are authorized to be reimbursed by the VA. In addition, VREASA ensures that the prudent layperson standard will be applied to emergency ambulance services to non-VA facilities.

I was pleased that the VA promulgated a regulation as an attempt to remedy this problem. However, to better ensure that our nation's veterans will be reimbursed by the VA for their emergency ambulance services at non-VA facilities, Congress should codify this requirement since administrations are free to change regulations. VREASA achieves codification giving our nation's veterans certainty, stability, and peace of mind to know that should the unforeseen occur where they need emergency ambulance services to a non-VA facility those expenses will be reimbursed.

Again, I thank the Committee for its consideration of VREASA today and look forward continuing to work in a bipartisan manner with the Committee to advance VREASA through the legislative process and toward final passage in the House.