

Representative Tim Walberg (MI-7)

Veterans Affairs Committee Member Day Testimony

Background: H.R. 3527, the POW Priority Care Act directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to elevate the priority group for Prisoners of War (POW) to Priority Group I, regardless of their service-connected level. Through enacting this legislation, POWs would receive the highest priority status for medical care at the VA.

Currently, there are 3,500 POW eligible veterans enrolled in VA health services. 2,800 are already enrolled in the Priority 1 care group. This leaves roughly 750 POW still categorized in the Priority 3 group.

Intro:

- I want to thank Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe for the opportunity to testify today.
- Taking care of our country's veterans is one of the most important things we can do as Members of Congress.
- Our service men and women give their all in the name of our nation and it is the obligation of Congress and our nation to give that same dedication to providing the highest quality care for when our heroes return home.
- Many members of the armed forces endured unthinkable hardship in captivity as Prisoners of War, while we will never forget those who did not return home, there are those who do come back.
- For those that do, they deserve the highest priority of care at the VA.
- Therefore, I introduced the POW Priority Care Act, which would move POWs to the front of the line giving them Priority 1 level VA care.

Summary:

- Under current VA care provisions, POW veterans are not among the top tier of care at the VA.
- Instead, POW veterans are in the third priority group, often placing them at a disadvantage in health care options.
- The priority system classification determines eligibility for healthcare services at the VA.
- Factors determining priority assignment include time and place of service, income level, and service-connected disability.
- The POW Priority Care Act would elevate POWs from Priority Group 3 to Priority Group 1 in terms of healthcare needs.
- By having Priority 1 status, POWs will have greater access to health care options at the VA.

Conclusion:

- We can all agree that veterans and Prisoners of War should not have to struggle to get the proper healthcare and medical services that fits their needs.
- I want to thank Reps. Krishnamoorthi, Guthrie, and Rush for joining me in introducing this bipartisan legislation.
- The legislation is supported by AMVets and we are continuing to gain support from other organizations.

- Prisoners of War have not only answered the call of duty, but they endured unthinkable hardship and made unquestioned sacrifice in service to our nation.
- Thankyou Mr./Mrs. Chairman and I urge the committee to mark up H.R. 3527 so that it can advance to the floor of the House for a vote.