

Introduction:

Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Roe, and distinguished members of the committee, it is an honor and a privilege to testify in support of over 18 million veterans across the United States; 750,000 of which call Virginia home.

I represent the First District of Virginia, which Fort A.P. Hill, Marine Corps Base Quantico, and Naval Support Facility Dahlgren call home. Additionally, constituents in my district support the mission at several installations in the National Capital Region and throughout Virginia and Maryland.

As a member from a district so full of men and women who have made incredible sacrifices for our nation, I have had the distinct pleasure to serve on their behalf. As such, I have been and will continue to be committed to our military and our veterans during my time in Congress.

Theme 1: Veteran Priorities

I routinely hear from the veterans community in my district by regularly convening a Veterans Advisory Council, engaging with veterans that I meet with and who call into my office and hosting several Veterans Forums throughout the year—one of which Ranking

Member Roe was kind enough to attend last year. In short, these platforms allow me to hear directly from veteran constituents who have first-hand knowledge of the issues they face.

Through their feedback, I have outlined the following areas as my priorities for veterans:

- Increasing efficiencies in the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Expanding veterans' access to medical care.
- Increasing collaboration to provide more services to veterans; and
- Combating veteran's homelessness.

Theme 2: Commend the Committee of their Work

In addition, I would like to commend this committee for the work they have done to support veterans. Over the past few years, your work has increased veterans' access to medical care and ensured we as a nation continue to keep our promise to take care of those who protect our freedom. And, while our system is far from perfect, this Committee continues to strive to seek out and eliminate the hurdles that burden our veterans.

Among this work, I would like to highlight **the Mission Act**. Signed into law last year and took effect this June, this legislation expanded the VA Choice Program by

increasing outside medical options, establishing a permanent community care program for veterans, and modifying how the VA utilizes private medical providers.

Additionally, this committee helped pass the **Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019**. Signed into law this past June, this legislation brought an end to a six-decade long struggle to provide benefits to approximately 52,000 “Blue Water” veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

Theme 3: Your Veterans Legislation

The work we do for our veterans, however is never done. To this end I would like to highlight two bills I have introduced that would further help our veterans:

H.R.1577 - VA Procurement Efficiency and Transparency

Act: This bill requires the VA to track cost savings resulting from its contracting competitions and to use standardized contracting procedures, ensuring dollars meant to support veterans aren't wasted because of bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Ultimately, this bill would improve procurement within the VA by putting in place consistent parameters for the VA to measure its cost savings from competition while encouraging the VA to organize its templates for key procurement documents and share them across the organization. This legislation will work to reform these archaic procurement rules through a commonsense procurement and transparency fix.

H.R. 2886 - Veterans Affairs Transfer of Information and sharing of Disability Examination Procedures with DOD

Doctors Act: This bill speeds up access to care for veterans by not subjecting them to another round of

medical screenings before a disability rating is issued.

Additionally, this bill further requires the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense to share medical and service record data electronically.

We have made great strides recently in improving the VA's level of care for our Veterans, but we have more work to do. My hope is that these bills can be part of that ongoing effort.

Conclusion:

I want to thank Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Roe, and the distinguished members of the committee for this opportunity to testify here today.

I have long believed that the benefits afforded our men and women in uniform have been earned through sacrifice and hardship, and that those benefits should be protected. I look forward to continuing to work with the committee to ensure our veterans have the resources they need and the benefits they have earned defending our freedom. We, as a nation, owe our veterans a debt that can truly never be repaid. Thank you.