



## **House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) Member's Day Remarks**

**Date:** Thursday, December 4, 2025

**Time:** Panel 4 - 11:00 AM EST

**Location:** HVAC Committee Room; 364 Cannon House Office Building

**Length:** 3 Minutes

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### **Suggested Remarks:**

**Thank you, Chairman Bost and Ranking Member Takano for holding today's Member Day hearing.**

**I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the committee and advocate for the construction of a new Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in the Rio Grande Valley and several pieces of legislation that are vital to South Texans.**

**Over the past few years, the veteran population has increased considerably in my district and throughout Texas.**

**According to the 2024 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, there are now more than 49,000 Veterans in our region of South Texas.**

**Of these veterans, over 24,000 suffer from a service-connected disability.**

**Unfortunately, because neither the Coastal Bend nor the Rio Grande Valley currently have a VA Medical Center, many of my constituents are forced to travel over 300 miles to obtain the medical care they have earned.**

**I urge the committee to work with me to right this wrong and bring a full-service VA Medical Center to the South Texas.**

I would also like to highlight the significance of H.R. 2102, the *Major Richard Star Act*.

**This important bill would ensure that all combat-disabled veterans receive concurrent receipt of their disability compensation and their retirement.**

**We must ensure our disabled veterans do not struggle to make ends meet.**

**Finally, recognizing the service of veterans must also include recognizing the bravery of military working dogs who perform their jobs with extreme courage.**

**Military working dogs save countless lives by detecting explosives and leading search and rescue missions. It is time they are honored as heroes.**

**That is why I will be re-introducing the *Sergent Fieldy Act*, to allow the burial of deceased military working dogs in veteran cemeteries.**

**This bill is in honor of Sgt. Fieldy, who served three tours in Afghanistan, earned the K-9 Medal of Courage Award in 2016, and was selected as the Military Hero Dog in the 2018 Hero Dog Awards.**

**I urge you and your colleagues to work with me in a bipartisan way to advance this bill and ensure that military working dogs receive the recognition they deserve.**

**Thank you, and I yield back.**