



STATEMENT OF

STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HEARING ON THE TOPIC OF:

PENDING LEGISLATION

March 18, 2026

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Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for inviting Student Veterans of America (SVA) to submit a statement for the record on the legislation pending before you today.

With a mission focused on empowering student veterans, SVA is committed to providing an educational experience that goes beyond the classroom. Through a dedicated and expansive network of on-campus chapters across the country, SVA aims to inspire yesterday's warriors by connecting student veterans with a community of like-minded chapter leaders. Every day these passionate leaders work to provide the necessary resources, network support, and advocacy to ensure student veterans, military-connected students, their families and survivors can effectively connect, expand their skills, and ultimately achieve their greatest potential.

SVA thanks the Committee for considering several pieces of legislation that would impact student veterans, military-connected students, their families, caregivers, and survivors in higher education.

H.R. 210, Dental Care for Veterans Act

SVA supports the intent of H.R. 210, *Dental Care for Veterans Act*, which would provide dental care to all veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. Currently, VA dental care is limited by statute and extends eligibility to those that have a disability-rating at 100% with a service-connected disability, prisoner-of-war status, a service-connected dental condition, unhoused or enrolled in Chapter 31 Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E).^{1,2} Utilization of Chapter 33, Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits alone does not confer eligibility for VA dental services, leaving many student veterans without access to essential oral health care.

According to VA, of the nearly nine million veterans enrolled in VA health care, approximately 26% are eligible for dental care.³ In fiscal year 2025 alone, 888,051 veterans received dental care through VA, with more than 3.5 million dental procedures delivered through community care.⁴ These figures underscore both the scale of need and the limitations of the current eligibility framework.

This small but impactful population underscores that dental care is not optional, it is essential to veteran success. Oral health directly affects confidence, which in turn shapes classroom engagement, academic persistence, and performance in interviews. SVA's annual Census reinforces the depth of this gap, highlighting that a significant share of student veterans lack access to dental coverage.⁵ Nearly 75 percent of student veterans work while enrolled,

¹ 38 U.S. Code § 1710, 1712.

² U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, *VA Dental Care*, last updated Jan. 12, 2026, <https://www.va.gov/health-care/about-va-health-benefits/dental-care/>.

³ U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, *VA Moves to Improve Dental Care Access for Eligible Veterans*, Feb. 10, 2026, <https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-moves-to-improve-dental-care-access-for-eligible-veterans/>.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Student Veterans of America. (2023). *SVA Census*. <https://studentveterans.org/research/sva-census/>

often in hospitality and retail roles where benefits are limited or nonexistent.⁶ In these sectors, only 40–55 percent of full-time workers are offered dental benefits, and just 10–20 percent of part-time workers have any access at all, leaving many without even the option to enroll.

Without this coverage, student veterans frequently delay or skip routine care, leading to pain, missed classes, difficulty concentrating, and reduced academic performance. Untreated dental issues can also undermine a student veteran’s confidence and professional presence during interviews, internships, and early career opportunities.⁷

Expanding eligibility through H.R. 210 would recognize oral health as a critical component of overall well-being, ensuring access to dental care that supports not only physical health but also the confidence, stability, and employment readiness student veterans need to succeed in school and transition into meaningful careers.⁸ By allowing a veterans’ dental record to be maintained within VA’s electronic health records system, this legislation will improve care coordination and eliminate gaps between VA and community care providers. Phased expansion eligibility would ensure that VA will be able to acquire the resources necessary to build capacity, hire providers, and maintain high-quality care in a responsible manner.

H.R. 1391, Student Veterans Benefit Restoration Act of 2025

SVA supports the intent of H.R. 1391, Student Veterans Benefit Restoration Act, which would restore VA education benefit entitlement to veterans, dependents, and survivors who are unable to complete their program and are victims of institutional fraud. The legislation also mandates that institutions repay VA the associated funds it had received. We offer several recommendations below to ensure the bill adequately addresses the full scope of the underlying issue.

Student veterans, dependents, and survivors, who used their VA education benefits, should not be penalized for the misconduct of institutions that engage in fraud. However, as written, this legislation only applies to future violations of fraud. SVA recommends that this legislation should include retroactive restoration of education entitlements for students affected before enactment. SVA welcomes collaboration in working with this Committee and VA to determine an appropriate amount of time.

H.R. 4114, EVEST Act

SVA supports H.R. 4114, *Ensuring Veterans’ Smooth Transition (EVEST) Act*, which would automatically enroll eligible veterans in VA’s healthcare system within sixty (60) days of their transition out of the military.

⁶ Id; See also Aubrey Wagner, Matthew Rae, and Gary Claxton, *Part-Time Workers Have Less Access to Employer-Based Coverage Than Full-Time Workers*, KFF Health News, Sept. 19, 2025, <https://www.kff.org/private-insurance/part-time-workers-have-less-access-to-employer-based-coverage-than-full-time-workers/>; See also

⁷ Am. Inst. of Dental Pub. Health, *Issue Brief: Oral Cancer Prevention For Veterans*, last accessed Mar. 20, 2026, <https://aidph.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Issue-Brief-Oral-Cancer-Prev-Vets.pdf>.

⁸ Id.

SVA has previously testified on how veterans routinely navigate overlapping jurisdictions among the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Education, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Labor, each operating with distinct definitions, timelines, and data systems.⁹ The burdensome, and oft confusing enrollment process, leads to veterans not obtaining essential health care when they may need it most upon transitioning out of the military. By requiring VA to notify veterans of their enrollment and provide clear, accessible options to opt out, it helps ensure veterans are aware of their eligibility while maintaining their autonomy. Requiring a Government Accountability Office review within 180 days will provide valuable insight into the most effective methods for reaching veterans of different ages and geographic areas.

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The continued success of veterans in higher education in the Post-9/11 era is no mistake or coincidence. In our Nation's history, educated veterans have always been the best of a generation and the key to solving our most complex challenges. Today's student veterans carry this legacy forward.

We thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and the Committee Members for your time, attention, and devotion to the cause of veterans, military-connected students, their families, caregivers and survivors.

⁹ Student Veterans of America, *Testimony Before the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs*, Mar. 3, 2026, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/VR/VR00/20260303/118976/HHRG-119-VR00-Wstate-BarletT-20260303.pdf>.