

**STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE LLOYD SMUCKER (PA-16)  
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH COMMITTEE ON  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2017**

Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Brownley, and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee on my legislation, the VA Billing Accountability Act.

On August 9, 2017, the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General reported that in Fiscal Year 2015, of roughly 15.4 million bills the Veterans Health Administration issued during 2015 approximately 1.7 million were improper bills for the treatment of service-connected conditions. To put this into perspective, the Veterans Health Administration collected a staggering \$13.9 million from our nation's veterans inappropriately. This is simply unacceptable.

Our service men and women should not have to pay for errors or delays by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For more than a decade, the Department of Veterans Affairs has failed to address its broken medical-billing system that leaves our nation's veterans to pick up an inaccurate and expensive bill. That is why I introduced the bipartisan VA Billing Accountability Act to relieve veterans of financial burdens caused by delays at the VA.

My congressional district is home to more than 38,000 veterans -- all of them deserve the highest quality medical care and the assurance from the VA that they will not be forced to foot the bill for the mistakes made by VA bureaucrats.

To address this ongoing issue, my bill authorizes the VA to waive veterans' co-payments if a veteran received a co-payment bill more than 120 days after they received care at the VA or 18 months after they received care at a non-VA facility.

The VA Billing Accountability Act also holds the VA accountable by giving the Secretary of the VA the authority to get rid of the requirement that veterans make a co-payment if the VA does not abide by the billing timing mandates.

To ensure accountability my bill requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to review the agency's copayment billing controls and notification systems to see if there are solutions that can better monitor and prevent erroneous bills within 180 days after enactment of this legislation. It is imperative that the Department of Veterans Affairs prioritizes improving its internal billing procedures.

Our nation's veterans and their families have sacrificed so much in defense of our nation. We should be making it easier, not harder, for them to transition to post-military life. That starts with making sure that the VA not only delivers quality health care, but also timely bills that our veterans can count on.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the committee today, and for all the work that the members of this committee do to ensure quality and affordable care for our nation's veterans.

I yield back.