

House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Statement for the Record
US Rep. Tim Walz (MN-01), Full Committee Ranking Member

Legislative Hearing

April 5, 2017

334 Cannon House Office Building

- Thank you for calling this hearing, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to include in the record this statement on behalf of my bill, H.R. 1725, the Quicker Benefits Delivery Act of 2017.

- In the last decade, Americans have developed a renewed understanding of the need to support our service members in battle. Unfortunately, our warriors' battles don't always end when they return home. With the end of the war in Iraq and the drawdown of troops in Afghanistan, the number of disabled veterans who need care has dramatically increased. Despite improvements in claims processing by

the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), veterans are still waiting too long to receive their earned benefits, creating financial hardship for these veterans and their families.

- The VA reports hundreds of thousands of veterans have been waiting longer than 125 days to have their claim adjudicated. While the VA has made progress in the last year, we believe there are common sense measures Congress can undertake to ensure our veterans are getting the care they need in a more-timely fashion.
- This is why I introduced Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act, H.R. 1725, to help speed up the process. The Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act will allow local doctors to conduct disability medical examinations for veterans. This conserves VA resources, cuts back on long wait times at VA hospitals, enables quicker diagnoses of disabilities and eliminates unnecessary trips to the VA or contracted compensation and pension exams for veterans in rural communities.
- Specifically, to further encourage the use of private medical evidence, we are amending title 38, United States Code, section 5125 to provide that, when a claimant submits

private medical evidence, including a private medical opinion, that is competent, credible, probative, and otherwise adequate for rating purposes, the Secretary shall not request a VA medical examination. This legislative change would require Veteran Service Representatives and Rating Veterans Service Representatives to document that private medical evidence was inadequate for rating purposes before ordering examinations, which are often unnecessary.

- Additionally, the legislation requires the VA to complete two reports, one 180 days after passage of the bill that tracks the bill's implementation and an annual report that tracks the most common reasons and disabilities for which claims with evidence submitted by non-VA medical professionals were denied by VBA.
- Our goal with this legislation is simple: to uphold the promises we've made to our veterans by ending the backlog and getting them the benefits they have earned and deserve. This is a common sense solution that will aid in adding efficiency to a complicated process in order to better serve our nation's heroes.

- I want to thank the American Legion, DAV, VFW, VVA AUSN and PVA for their support at this hearing today.
- Thank you, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.