

VA Committee Member Day – May 16, 2018

- Chairman Roe, Ranking Member Walz, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for allowing me this time at the first-ever VA Committee Member Day.
- I am convinced that the root cause of many of the VA's challenges is persistent understaffing. I believe that a bill I introduced along with Rep. Correa, HR 5521, The VA Hiring Enhancement Act, will help the VA to fill some of these vacancies.
- Our bill has three main provisions. First, it would allow physicians to be released from non-compete agreements for the purpose of serving in the VA for at least one year. These agreements may serve a purpose in the proper context, but should never serve as a roadblock to caring for veterans within the VA system.
- Second, our bill updates the minimum training requirements for VA physicians. Completion of a medical residency is widely accepted as standard comprehensive training for clinical physicians in the United States. However, current law only requires that a physician be licensed in order to treat veterans. While in practice, the VA currently hires almost exclusively those physicians which have completed a residency, this provision will update those minimum requirements already established in law and ensure that they are the appropriate ones.
- Finally, our bill would place veterans' hospitals on a level playing field with the private sector when it comes to recruiting timelines. Often, private sector health care providers begin recruiting medical residents as they begin their final year of residency, sometimes even earlier. These residents often end up with a solid job offer from the private sector before VA recruiters are even able to get their recruiting process started.
- Our bill authorizes VA recruiters to make job offers to physicians up to 2 years prior to fulfilling all of the VA's requirements. These offers are contingent, of course, on the physician meeting all VA requirements before they begin practicing at the VA. It offers job security to medical residents who want to work at the VA when they complete their training, and allows VA facilities and recruiters to shore up appointments further in advance, helping them to plan and forecast medical workforce needs.
- We've worked closely with this committee's staff, VA recruiters, and VSOs on this bill, and I'm pleased to report that it has garnered wide support, including formal endorsement from American Legion and Paralyzed Veterans of America. Thank you again for allowing me this time, I yield back.