

VA Committee Hearing on H.R. 2322 Testimony

Chairman Wenstrup and Ranking Member Brownley, thank you for allowing me to be here today to testify on H.R. 2322, The Injured and Amputee Veterans Bill of Rights. I would like to start off by thanking the subcommittee members and staff for their time and willingness to work with me on this important topic.

I think we can all agree that our veterans have earned the highest quality possible health care. I understand there are problems at the Veterans Affairs and that this committee is diligently working to address these concerns to ensure our veterans receive the benefits and care they deserve. I also know there are great doctors, nurses and staff that work hard to make sure our veterans receive timely care.

With that being said, I believe a veteran's healthcare decisions are personal choices. We know all too well that the VA can be an intimidating and hard to navigate bureaucracy. There are layers of paperwork and red tape that can make these healthcare decisions daunting. H.R. 2322 moves to empower veterans when it comes to making their own healthcare choices and it does so by ensuring injured and amputee veterans know their healthcare rights.

Years on the battlefield has taken a toll on our war fighters. Our veterans are younger than before and transitioning from active duty can be difficult. We need to ensure that amputee veterans have the best access to care and ability to more easily transition into civilian life.

The Injured and Amputee Veterans Bill of Rights is a bipartisan approach to empower injured and amputee veterans in making their healthcare choices. This bill simply requires the VA to prominently display a list of "rights" in VA Orthotic and Prosthetic (O&P) clinics as well as on their website.

These rights include:

1. The right to access the highest quality and most appropriate O&P care
2. The right to continuity of care during their transition
3. The right to select the practitioner of their choice
4. The right to consistent and portable healthcare, including obtaining comparable services at any VA medical facility
5. The right to timely and efficient O&P care
6. The right to play a meaningful role in their rehabilitation process and a second medical opinion
7. The right to both a primary prosthesis and orthosis and a functional spare
8. The right to be treated with respect and dignity during and after their rehabilitation
9. The right to transition and readjust to civilian life in an honorable manner

Additionally, the VA would be required to educate their staff so VA employees can help veterans navigate this process.

To make sure veterans are receiving the care they deserve and need, our bill also requires the VA to follow up and resolve any complaints by veterans who believe the VA is not meeting their O&P needs.

Mr. Chairman, at the end of the day, veterans should receive the best available and timely care they can get. I know this is something you and your staff have worked hard on and I applaud your unwavering commitment to our veterans.

I am willing to work with you and your committee in any way to better this legislation so that we can empower injured and amputee veterans when they are making their healthcare choices.

Thank you for your time today and for the work this committee is doing to keep our promise to our nation's heroes.