

## The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act

Courtesy of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Majority Staff

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**VETERANS' AFFAIRS**  
CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

### BACKGROUND:

*The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act* would ensure that the men and women who have served have access to the modern, good care and services they have earned. This bill includes a number of bipartisan proposals that would enhance and reform the delivery of services at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) by ultimately putting all veterans, their families, and their survivors – not bureaucracy – first.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Includes the House passed *VET-TEC Authorization Act* (H.R. 1669) which would fully fund the VA VET-TEC educational assistance program to expand high tech career opportunities for veterans and transitioning servicemembers. This program has a 84% graduation rate and an average starting salary of over \$66,000.
- Includes the House passed *Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act* (H.R. 542) which would expand access to Home- and Community-Based Services at every VA medical center, which would allow severely ill and aging veterans the dignity of receiving their care at home rather than in institutions.
- Includes the *Veterans Care Improvement Act* (H.R. 3520) which would strengthen the details of many community care provisions from prior law, and most importantly establishes needed access parameters for admission to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Programs for those veterans seeking this care at their most vulnerable points.
- Includes the House passed *HOME Act* (H.R. 3848) which would raise the Grant and Per-Diem rate for veteran homelessness providers who partner with VA and provide rideshares to veterans for medical, housing, and employment appointments and ensure veterans can get the resources they need to be lifted out of homelessness.
- Includes the *Veterans Education Assistance and Improvement Act* (H.R. 3874) which would cut through red tape for the GI Bill and allow student veterans to use their benefits that best meet their needs.
- Includes the *Servicemember Employment Protection Act* (H.R. 3943) which would modernize USERRA protections and increase accountability at the Department of Labor so that deployed National Guard and Reservists have the proper employment protections in place back when they return home.
- Includes the House passed *COPE Act* (H.R. 3581) which would recognize the mental strain often experienced by caregivers of certain veterans by providing community mental health grants to help alleviate caregiver's concerns about stigma.
- Includes other bills such as the *RELIEVE Act* (H.R. 815) and the *VA Emergency Transportation Act* (H.R. 1774) which would clarify access to emergency medical care for newly enrolled veterans and would ensure that needed transportation between emergency facilities is not impeded by bureaucracy when veterans are seeking life-saving care.

- Includes *Gerald's Law Act* (H.R. 234), which would allow survivors of certain veterans who choose to die at home or while in receipt of VA hospice care, to receive a certain burial and funeral allowance. Currently, this allowance is provided to survivors of those veterans who passed away at a VA facility.
- Includes the *Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach Act* (H.R. 984), which would authorize VA to provide grants to state and Indian Tribes to support county Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) and tribal VSOs to provide improved outreach and assistance to underserved, rural, and Native American veterans regarding VA benefits.
- Includes the *Modernization of VA Disability Benefits Questionnaires Act* (H.R. 4461), which would update IT systems and processes to ensure that disability examination reports completed by contracted disability examiners are standardized and machine-readable, which would improve efficiency in VA's processing of disability compensation claims for veterans.
- Includes the *EHR Program RESET Act* (H.R. 2809) which would address the chronic struggles of VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) program by authorizing the project, setting clear purposes, establishing a standardized baseline for the system, creating quality and performance metrics, and reporting. The provision would also impose conditions that must be met to implement the EHR system at additional facilities, and it would require VA to rehabilitate the facilities currently using the system. Two years after enactment, this provision would direct the EHRM program to wind down unless VA has demonstrated consistent improvement in its reported data and rehabilitated all facilities.
- Includes the *VA Office of Inspector General Training Act* (H.R. 2733) which would require all new VA employees to receive training on reporting wrongdoing and cooperating with the VA Inspector General.
- Includes the *VA Medical Center Security Report Act of 2023* (H.R. 3504) which would require VA to conduct a survey of each of their facilities on security weaknesses and the status of their police force as well as provide a report on the results of these surveys to Congress.

**\*NOTE:** Each of these bills has gone through some form of regular order and the entire package is fully offset and would not add to the deficit.

#### **THE MESSAGE:**

- *The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act* delivers on the promise House Republicans have made to create a modern, efficient VA for today and tomorrow's veteran community.
- *The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act* expands economic opportunity for veterans, gives veterans a choice in where they choose to live out their sunset years or receive healthcare, modernizes the disability benefits claims process, and holds VA accountable to the taxpayers and veterans they serve.
- *The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21<sup>st</sup> Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act* effectively addresses rising crime in major cities by forcing VA to report to Congress on security weaknesses to ensure our nation's heroes are safe every time they visit VA.