

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

H.R. 7816: Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act

Background:

Current law (e.g., 38 U.S.C. §§ 5103, 5104) requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide specific information at various points throughout the VA claims process to veterans and their survivors who have filed disability compensation claims for VA benefits.

However, following a March 20, 2024, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs oversight hearing, the Committee learned that VA's attempts to make these letters comprehensive based on feedback from Veterans Service Organizations, as well as compliant with law, have fallen short. As a result, VA's notice letters are difficult to understand, lengthy (sometimes over 20 pages long), and filled with undecipherable legal jargon and information that is irrelevant to a veteran's overall claim. Further, some VA letters lack the necessary information for veterans to make informed decisions on what to do next in the claims process. These complex letters cause veterans and survivors confusion, anxiety, undue stress, and panic. Some veterans are so overwhelmed that they simply abandon their claims.

The Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act would require VA to contract with a nonpartisan, federally-funded research entity that would conduct a study on, and provide recommendations for, revising VA notice letters to be shorter and more understandable for veterans and their survivors. This bill would also require the VA Secretary to report those findings to Congress and implement the recommendations.

The Message:

- VA's notice letters are critical to ensuring veterans understand how to pursue their disability compensation claim for the VA benefits that they have earned, and veterans should not be subjected to letters that are complex and confusing.
- *The Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act* is commonsense legislation that would ensure veterans receive notice letters from VA that are concise, understandable, and provide sufficient information for them to make informed, clear decisions on their claims for VA benefits.