

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

H.R. 7732: Enhancing the Transitioning Servicemember's Experience Act

Background:

Congress established the military Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in the 1991 National Defense Administration Act (NDAA). Initially, TAP was aimed at helping service members who were involuntarily separated due to forced withdrawals. Over time, TAP has expanded to offer pre-separation counseling and various two-day track courses on employment, education, and entrepreneurship. In 2022 only 25% of active duty servicemembers started TAP on time. This is unacceptable. The transition period can be a sensitive time in a service member's life, as it involves a lot of changes and loss of identity. To help prepare service members for civilian life, TAP assists veterans in connecting their transferable skills from their military experience to the civilian workforce and prepares them for a successful transition.

The Enhancing the Transitioning Servicemember's Experience Act, or ETS Act, introduced by Rep. Derrick Van Orden (WI-03) with Chairman Bost as original co-sponsor, would make important changes to the Transition Assistance Program to strengthen accountability, better data tracking, and ensure the Department of Labor, Department of Defense, and VA prioritizes transitioning servicemembers and their families. Proposed changes to this legislation include mandating TAP to be conducted in person when possible, creating a separate TAP track for Guard and Reserve members, providing increased base access for Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), introducing a pilot program for TAP spouses, conducting an additional study by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to find ways to better utilize the Skillbridge program, screening for food insecurity, and having the Department of Defense provide Congress with annual tracking records.

The Message:

- Our nation owes our men and women in uniform a debt that can never fully be repaid, by preparing them for civilian life we can begin to continue to support our veterans.
- *The Enhancing the Transitioning Servicemember's Experience Act* would require the services to implement a tracking system to hold Command accountable and highlight the current status of taking time on time.
- This legislation would not result in any increase in direct spending, but it would be subject to appropriation; however, the benefits of this legislation would pay dividends for our continued volunteer service.
- Ensuring a smooth transition for servicemembers remains a top priority to continue to provide the best support for our veterans after their service.