

# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

## H.R. 5530: The VA Emergency Transportation Access Act

### Background:

In February 2023, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [announced](#) a proposed final rule, “Changes in Rates VA Pays for Special Modes of Transportation” that would establish a new payment methodology for emergency transportation, such as ground and air ambulances, that is below the reimbursement rates of emergency transportation. The rule changes the payment model to mirror the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reimbursement schedule. As a part of the *No Surprises Act (P.L. 116-260)*, CMS was charged with collecting and analyzing appropriate transportation data to determine fair reimbursement rates. VA should not be paying rates above those paid by other federal government agencies; however, veterans in rural locations could face hardship should emergency air transport not be available.

Without proper plans and safeguards in place, this proposed rule could have a negative impact for various special modes of transportation providers, especially those in rural communities. After numerous meetings with VA, stakeholders, and participation in several Industry Day information sessions, it has become clear that VA will be challenged to meet their 2024 schedule for responsible implementation and Congress must take action.

### What the VA Emergency Transportation Access Act would do:

*The VA Emergency Transportation Access Act* would ensure that VA completes several due-diligence requirements before pursuing a change that could reduce reimbursement rates for emergency transportation. Additionally, this bill would ensure that future rates properly reflect the cost of emergency transportation. **These requirements include:**

- a review of the impact a change in rates would have on veterans’ access to care;
- consultation with industry experts, CMS, VA subject matter experts, and Veterans Service Organizations; and
- developing a formal process of updating the rates that protects or expands veterans’ current access to emergency transportation.

**Supporting Organizations:** PVA, VFW, The American Legion, Global Medical Response, Airbus, Superior Ambulance, American Ambulance Association, Life Flight Network, The Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS)