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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Fiduciary Reform Takes Center Stage at Subcommittee Hearing

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Today, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations (O&I) heard testimony considering four pieces of legislation: H.R. 2985, H.R. 3730, H.R. 4481, and H.R. 5948.

The Veterans Fiduciary Reform Act of 2012, introduced by Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations Chairman Rep. Bill Johnson will bring much needed reforms in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fiduciary Program. At a February oversight hearing on the Fiduciary Program, it was revealed that the program was failing its intended purpose and putting many veterans at great financial risk.

“The Veterans Fiduciary Reform Act of 2012 is based on problems uncovered before, during, and after our February hearing, as well as from valuable input from Veterans Service Organizations and individual veterans on the ground who have experienced difficulties with the program,” Johnson said. “This legislation will require a credit and criminal background check every time a fiduciary is appointed, and allow veterans to petition to have their fiduciary removed if problems arise.”

The Veterans Affairs Employee Accountability Act (H.R. 4481) recently introduced by subcommittee member Rep. Phil Roe was also discussed. The bill will ensure that VA employees in violation of any civil law do not receive any retention incentive, payment, or award for or during the year of such violation.

“VA Employees that are knowingly violating civil contracts have not only avoided punishment, some of them are actually receiving annual bonuses. VA officials have downplayed these awards for bad behavior that highlights the lack of oversight at VA,” said Rep. Roe.

“The Veterans Affairs Employee Accountability Act will close the loopholes in the system, and hold VA employees accountable for their actions. Financial incentives can be a valuable retention tool, but should not be given to employees who break the law. They need to be based on superior performance on behalf of America’s veterans, nothing less.”

Also considered today was H.R. 2985, the Veteran’s I.D. Card Act, introduced by Rep. Todd Akin, as well as H.R. 3730, the Veterans Data Breach Timely Notification Act, introduced by Rep. Joe Donnelly. The Veteran’s I.D. Card Act will require VA to issue veterans’ I.D. cards to any veteran who requests one. “By providing veterans this option they will have at their disposal a more rugged and safer form of identification to prove their military service,” said Rep. Akin.

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