



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

Chairman Phil Roe, M.D.

H.R. 2123: Veterans E-Health and Telemedicine Support Act of 2017 (VETS) Act

Background:

Telemedicine (or telehealth) generally refers to the use of information technology and telecommunications to provide or augment the delivery of health care. After a number of pilot programs dating back to the late 1970s, VA implemented telemedicine nationally in 2003 and expanded its reach in 2011. Last year, VA spent over \$1.2 billion to provide telemedicine services to more than 700,000 veteran patients.

VA has used telemedicine as a key to increasing VA's internal capacity to provide timely care to veteran across the country, particularly in rural areas. However, the expansion of telemedicine programs within VA is hampered by restrictions on the ability of VA providers to practice telemedicine across state lines.

On August 3, 2017, Secretary Shulkin announced that the department would be amending regulations to allow VA health care providers to practice in any state when they are acting within the scope of their VA employment.

H.R. 2123 would give the VA Secretary the legislative authority to allow VA providers to practice telemedicine across state lines. Specifically, it would authorize a VA licensed health care provider to practice telemedicine in any state, regardless of whether or not the patient or provider is located on federal government property.

The Message:

- Telemedicine has expanded veterans' ability to access quality health care, particularly for rural veterans who do not live in proximity to a VA facility.
- Current restrictions on the ability of VA providers to practice across state lines has hampered VA's expansion of telemedicine.
- This bill would give the VA Secretary the legislative authority to allow VA providers to practice telemedicine across state lines.