



# MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

CHARTERED BY CONGRESS

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The Honorable David P. Roe, M.D.  
Chairman, House Veterans' Affairs Committee  
335 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Roe:

On behalf of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), whose membership is comprised entirely of combat wounded veterans, I am pleased to offer our support for the VA Accountability First Act of 2017. If enacted, this legislation would establish reasonable accountability measures for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees.

The ability to reward good employees and hold poor employees accountable is essential to any high-performing organization. Unfortunately, events in recent years have made it clear to MOPH that VA lacks the necessary authority to punish, remove, and recoup the performance bonuses of employees who were found to have endangered veterans, misused government funds, and otherwise underperformed in their duties. While we understand that VA cannot simply fire its way to success, we feel that improvements to these authorities made by this legislation are critical to allowing VA to function as it should, while also maintaining veterans' trust in their VA. Furthermore, these reforms would send the right message to the vast majority of VA employees who do an exemplary job every day that their good performance is truly appreciated.

MOPH also supports the provision that would grant the Secretary direct hiring authority for VA Medical Center and Veterans Integrated Service Network Directors with demonstrated abilities in their fields. We feel that if it becomes easier to remove poor employees, it must then be easier to hire high-quality replacements as well. We are also pleased that this legislation would further discourage whistleblower retaliation, as no VA employee should ever fear reprisal for identifying deficiencies that could endanger veterans in any way.

MOPH thanks you for your leadership on this issue and your commitment to veteran-centric VA reform. We look forward to working with you to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

Respectfully,

Hershel Gober  
National Commander