

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

H.R. 815: The RELIEVE Act

Background:

Current law prohibits the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from reimbursing veterans for emergency care services received in a non-VA facility for conditions unrelated to the veteran's military service unless the veteran is an "active" VA patient. VA considers an "active" patient one who has had at least one VA health care appointment in the preceding 24 months. However, veterans who are newly enrolled in the VA health care system may not have had the opportunity to receive a VA health care appointment due to long wait times in some regions and/or for certain services. As such, the veteran would not be classified as an "active" patient if they were to file for reimbursement for emergency services under current practice.

The RELIEVE Act would close this loophole and allow VA to reimburse veterans for emergency care services received in a non-VA facility for non-service-connected conditions in the 60 days following the veteran's enrollment in the VA healthcare system, even if the veteran has not yet had a VA health care appointment. This bill would afford veterans a 60-day grace period to ensure they get the repayment they have earned.

The Message:

- Emergency situations are stressful enough, no veteran and their family should be met with undue payment burdens if they receive urgent medical treatment outside of VA.
- *The RELIEVE Act* is a commonsense bill to give newly enrolled veterans peace-of-mind in knowing that they will not be faced with costly medical bills should they have to visit a non-VA facility in the event of an emergency.