

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

H.R. 1530: The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act (Rep. Luttrell)

Background:

Under current law, VA is not required to update the public-facing Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQ) on its website for use by a veteran's private provider. DBQs are standardized forms used by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) when performing disability examinations in support of a veteran's claim for disability compensation.

Additionally, veterans who live overseas have reported challenges receiving travel pay reimbursements for attending a disability exam. Furthermore, veterans have raised concerns that they often miss their disability exams because they were not notified in a timely manner. Moreover, governmental veteran service officers (VSO), known as county or tribal VSOs, assist veterans with their claims locally. These VSOs have urged VA to provide them with enhanced access to VA's claims processing systems to better help veteran claimants.

The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act would make several improvements to the VA's claims process for veterans by:

- Ensuring that DBQs are up to date on VA's website;
- Requiring a VA report on improving travel pay reimbursements for overseas veterans that attended a disability exam;
- Enhancing communication on the scheduling of a disability exam between contract examiners, veterans, and the veteran's representative; and,
- Mandating a VA report on the feasibility, advisability, and technical limitations of providing governmental VSOs increased access to VA systems.

The Message:

- Ensuring that disability benefits questionnaires are up to date on VA's website is critical to better serving veterans, particularly those in rural and remote areas.
- No veteran should miss a disability exam because VA failed to provide them with reasonable notice and the opportunity to reschedule.
- *The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act* would help remove barriers that prevent veterans from accessing the disability benefits they have earned.