CARING FOR AMERICA'S VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES
THE RESTORING VETERANS' TRUST ACT OF 2014

The Inspector General's interim report on *Patient Wait Times, Scheduling Practices, and Alleged Patient Deaths at the Phoenix Health Care System* and the results of VA's face-to-face audit raise a number of issues that must be immediately addressed. **THE RESTORING VETERANS' TRUST ACT OF 2014** would increase Department accountability and immediately improve access to health care and veterans' benefits. Below is a summary of some of the major initiatives of this legislation.

Provisions to Support VA Health Care and Provide Accountability in the Department

- ***Removal of Incompetent Senior Executives:*** This legislation would provide the VA Secretary authority to immediately remove incompetent senior executives based on poor job performance while maintaining due process for those employees. It would also provide authority for VA's Acting Secretary to remove senior executives notwithstanding the 120-day moratorium in current law.

- ***Shortening Wait Times for Veterans:*** This bill would require the Secretary to prioritize contracts with Federally Qualified Health Centers, Community Health Centers, medical facilities receiving funding from the Indian Health Service, and the Department of Defense to provide hospital care, medical services, and other health care to veterans in order to shorten wait time veterans may be experiencing.

  This legislation would also standardize the process VA uses to send patients into private medical care when VA is unable to provide them the care they need in a timely manner.

- ***Direct Hire Authority:*** This bill would provide VA with authority to hire new doctors, nurses and other providers in an expedited manner to address system-wide health care provider shortages.

- ***Authorization of Major Medical Facility Leases:*** This legislation would authorize VA to enter into 27 major medical facility leases in 18 states and Puerto Rico.

- ***National Health Service Corps Partnership:*** This bill would deem VA facilities as eligible to receive designations under the Public Health Service Act. This would allow National Health Service Corps participants to receive scholarships and loan repayment for employment at VA facilities, making it easier for VA to attract needed personnel.

- ***Expansion of Health Professionals Educational Assistance Program:*** This bill would extend access to VA's health care scholarship program for those individuals pursuing a medical degree with the intent of specializing in primary care.

- ***Upgrading VA's Scheduling Software Package:*** It is widely known that VA's scheduling system is grossly antiquated and inadequate. This bill would require VA to commence agile development of an upgrade to its scheduling software package and complete full deployment of the upgrade by March 31, 2016. It also contains minimum requirements for the package related to usability, functionality, and a dashboard in order for better administrative monitoring of wait times and resourcing.

- ***Presidential Commission on Access to VA Health Care:*** This bill would require the President to create a Commission of experts to look at VA health care access issues and recommend actions to bolster capacity. A report to the President would be required within 90 days of the Commission's first meeting.

- ***Presidential Commission on Capital Planning for VA Medical Facilities:*** This bill would require the establishment of a Commission on Capital Planning for VA medical facilities to improve VA's cradle to grave capital asset processes, from facility planning and project management to finding ways to break through the backlog of identified construction and renovation projects.

- ***Authorization for Emergency Funding:*** This bill would authorize emergency funding to hire new doctors, nurses and other providers in order to address system-wide health care provider shortages and to take other steps necessary to ensure timely access to care.

Provisions to Support Veterans and their Families

Nearly all the following provisions were voted out of the Veterans Affairs' Committee. Most were contained in omnibus bills that were passed unanimously out of Committee. In order to reach out for bipartisan support, some provisions were modified and others were removed, which significantly brings down the cost of this section of the bill when compared to the previous version.

- ***Caregivers Benefits:*** This bill would extend comprehensive services and benefits to the most severely injured pre-9/11 veterans and offer wrap-around services to all other caregivers.

- ***VA Dental Care and Complementary and Alternative Medicine Expansion:*** This legislation includes provisions that would expand access to VA health care – including complementary and alternative medicine – and dental care, in a cost-effective and equitable way.

- ***Advance Appropriations for VA:*** This legislation would ensure veterans receive consistent access to the benefits they have earned by establishing advance appropriations for the mandatory accounts at VA.

- ***Restoration of Full COLA for Military Retirees:*** This legislation would restore full cost-of-living adjustments for all military retirees.

- ***Reproductive Health:*** This legislation would help female and male veterans who have suffered significant spinal cord, reproductive and urinary tract injuries start a family.

- ***Ending the benefits backlog:*** Members from both sides of the aisle have presented legislative solutions that would support VA's ongoing efforts and would make needed improvements to the claims system.

- ***In-State Tuition Assistance for Post-9/11 Veterans:*** This legislation would give our transitioning servicemembers a fair shot at attaining their educational goals without incurring an additional financial burden.

- ***Extension of Health Care Access for Recently Separated Veterans:*** This legislation would extend from five to ten years unfettered access to VA health care for recently separated veterans to address their health care needs early.

- ***Sexual Assault:*** This legislation contains important provisions that would improve the delivery of care and benefits to veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military.