VA Information Technology Reform Act of 2021

Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been making great strides in the last few years to update its legacy information technology (IT) systems. VA currently has at least four IT projects underway whose budgets exceed $100 million annually. One of them, the Electronic Health Record Modernization effort, has an annual budget of over $2.6 billion, which is equivalent to half of VA's base budget for all IT operations. To date, none of VA's major IT projects were authorized by Congress, and Congress is not regularly informed on their launch or progress. While there are many requirements for VA to report to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) about these projects, Congress is not privy to those reports. This lack of transparency is particularly concerning given that VA's history is littered with failed IT projects that have wasted billions in taxpayer dollars.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Reform Act of 2021 would give Congress meaningful visibility into all of VA's major IT projects. The bill would prevent VA from starting any new major IT before submitting a cost estimate, schedule, and list of performance goals to Congress. This would ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent responsibly and effectively in support of VA's technology modernization efforts.

The Message:

- As VA's budget continues to increase, Congress must conduct effective oversight of how taxpayer dollars are being used.
- VA is taking admirable steps to update its outdated IT systems but VA's history of wasteful, failed IT projects indicate a clear and ongoing need for greater transparency and accountability.
- The VA Information Technology Reform Act of 2021 would give Congress the information it needs to ensure VA's IT projects remain on-budget and on-track and taxpayer dollars are spent wisely in service of veterans.