

# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON **VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

REPUBLICANS | RANKING MEMBER MIKE BOST

## **H.R. 1276: The VA VACCINE Act**

### **Background:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on Americans, including America's veterans. Operation Warp Speed has resulted in multiple safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19. Ensuring that as many veterans as possible are able to access those vaccines is key to getting past the pandemic and saving lives. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has done an excellent job getting veterans vaccinated so far. However, not all veterans are eligible to seek VA care. This has led to heartbreaking stories across the country of elderly, high-risk veterans being denied vaccines at VA medical facilities. For example, in Poughkeepsie, New York, a 78-year-old Korean War veteran with a heart condition was refused a vaccine from VA because his household income exceeded VA's income threshold despite the vaccine being free to all Americans, regardless of income.

The VA VACCINE Act would ensure that no veteran seeking a COVID-19 vaccine is turned away by VA. It would allow VA to provide vaccines to all veterans including those living abroad and those who are not eligible to enroll in the VA healthcare system. It would also allow VA to provide COVID-19 vaccines to the caregivers of veterans in various VA home-based and long-term care programs. Enrolled veterans and their caregivers would receive priority access to COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine availability to others would be dependent on supply. This would ensure that the most vulnerable veterans remain at the front of the line and that VA makes appropriate use of its vaccine allotment.

### **The Message:**

- Vaccines are key to getting past the pandemic, getting back to normal, and saving lives.
- Every veteran who wants to get vaccinated against COVID-19 should be able to get vaccinated at a VA medical facility. So should the caregivers of those veterans who are most vulnerable.
- The bipartisan VA VACCINE Act would bolster VA's vaccination efforts and ensure as many veterans and caregivers as possible are able to get vaccinated against this deadly virus.