



## **Support VA Accountability Legislation to Enable VA Leaders to Manage Workforce Issues Effectively to Improve Healthcare Access for Veterans**

### **BACKGROUND**

In the past several years, national headlines have revealed problems with appointment scheduling at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as was exemplified by the Phoenix VA Medical Center. While much of the VA workforce is comprised of hard-working employees, we have heard stories, and experienced in many cases, veterans being negatively impacted by poor performing employees who fail in their duties.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a study that found, on average, it takes 6 months to 1 year to remove a permanent civil service employee in the federal workforce. It sometimes takes longer. VA senior leadership has admitted to Congress it is often too difficult to fire bad employees at the VA.

Recently, VA's arcane civil service rules have hampered the Department's ability to dismiss an employee who engaged in an armed robbery; discipline a nurse who participated in a veteran's surgery while intoxicated; and they are deficient in holding employees accountable for the continued failures to manage several major construction projects, including a new veterans hospital in Aurora, Colorado, which is now 4 years past due, slated now for final completion in 2018 and more than one billion dollars over budget.

VetsFirst is proud to support House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Phil Roe's **VA Accountability First Act** (H.R. 1259). This legislation would provide the VA Secretary with increased flexibility to remove, demote, or suspend any VA employee, including Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, for bad performance or misconduct. It would also provide increased protection for whistleblowers. HR 1259 would:

- Allow for expedited removal of bad employees that engage in misconduct
- Institute a 15-day window of response and final decision for removals
- Expedite appeals decisions to prevent endless appeals and red tape
- Recoup bonuses paid to employees convicted of felonies
- Improve hiring authority for Local VA Hospital Directors
- Recoup expenses or travel benefits from employees who engage in fraud

### **VETSFIRST REQUEST TO POLICYMAKERS**

**Cosponsor and pass HR 1259 to provide the VA Secretary with increased flexibility to remove, demote or suspend any VA employee, including Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, for bad performance or misconduct.** House sponsor: Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN).