



Veterans for Common Sense (VCS)

1140 3rd Street Northeast, Space 2138

Washington, DC 20002

VeteransforCommonSense.org

March 9, 2021

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The Honorable Mark Takano
Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
B234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Bost
Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
3460 O'Neill House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

SUBJECT: Veterans for Common Sense Supports the VA VACCINE Act of 2021

Dear Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Bost,

We write to express the strong support of Veterans for Common Sense (VCS) for the VA VACCINE Act of 2021. We deeply appreciate your leadership in authoring this bipartisan Veterans' Affairs Committee bill to further expand access to the COVID vaccination for the millions of our nation's veterans who are not currently enrolled or eligible to enroll in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare.

Thank you for ensuring that this legislation would extend VA's ability to provide these crucially important vaccinations to all our nation's veterans. As we know, only about nine million of our nation's 19.5 million veterans are currently enrolled in VA healthcare. This legislation is all the more important given the fact that millions of veterans are not eligible to enroll in VA healthcare due to income limitations or other enrollment factors.

Additionally, while implementing this bill, it would be an excellent opportunity for VA to enhance its outreach and increase enrollment of many more veterans in need, including minority and under-represented veteran subpopulations that may currently be under-enrolled. It would also be important for VA to contact and include veterans discharged with "bad paper" under conditions other than dishonorable, in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 101(2).

The bill's current inclusion of veterans' caregivers is also of critical importance. We continue to look forward to implementation of the planned expansion of the VA Caregiver Program to include the caregivers of Gulf War and other veterans who served between May 8, 1975 and September 11, 2001. Meanwhile, this bill importantly also includes veterans' caregivers who are enrolled in VA's Program of General Caregiver Support Services – though outreach is of great importance there, too, for caregivers not currently enrolled.

We are in very strong support of this legislation and are grateful for your leadership efforts. The expanded coverage provided by the VA VACCINE Act is likely to be an important component in helping to resolve this international emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony Hardie".

Anthony Hardie

National Chair & Director

Veterans for Common Sense