Improve Quality of Care for Veterans and Increase Recruitment of Physician Assistants at the Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System


The GOOD Act would authorize a pilot program to advance training and education opportunities for veterans who served as medics in the Armed Forces and agree to work in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system in underserved areas as Physician Assistants (PAs). The GOOD Act would also establish a minimum number of scholarships for PAs under the VA’s educational programs.

**Background:** There are over 2,200 PAs employed by the VA healthcare system, practicing in a wide range of specialties including primary care, mental health, and general surgery, among many other fields. PAs often serve as the first point of contact for patients at the VA and are tasked with providing efficient and high-quality care to veterans as part of a collaborative team.

Timely access to quality patient care is among the most critical issues facing our nation’s veterans. The GOOD Act aims to decrease wait times by increasing the supply of PAs – one of the top six critical need occupations in the VA system. A review of VA provider staffing done in late 2016 by the Office of Inspector General reported that PAs ranked third among health professions experiences significant provider shortages, with a 23% vacancy rate. By supporting former service members in launching careers as PAs within the VA, this legislation will greatly improve both the access and quality of healthcare for our nation’s veteran population, especially in rural communities, as well as encourage the utilization and growth of the PA profession with the VA.

H.R. 3262 passed the House of Representatives on 7/28/17, and is currently awaiting consideration in the Senate. Before its passage by the House, a provision regarding competitive compensation for PAs working in the VA was passed separately by Congress in S. 114, the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, and signed into law on 8/12/17.

**AAPA Legislative Recommendation:** AAPA asks Congress to support the Grow Our Own Directive (GOOD) Act (S.426 / H.R. 3262), which was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) and supported by Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS), and introduced in the House of Representatives by Reps. Ann Kuster (D-NH) and Jack Bergman (R-MI). AAPA believes that this bipartisan legislation is a critical element in ensuring that veterans receive both the care that they deserve from the VA, and the opportunity to transition into civilian careers after completing their service.

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