

APRN Workgroup Letter to Congress

September 12, 2016

TUESDAY SUSPENSION VOTE: Remove Special Interest Sec. 415 from HR 5985 so Congress can Pass a Clean Bill Extending Expiring Veterans Benefits as Usual

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to request that a controversial new special-interest provision in HR 5985, the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2016 scheduled for a vote on the Tues., Sept. 13, suspension calendar, be removed from the bill so it can pass and ensure our Veterans the benefits they need and deserve. If the new special-interest provision is not removed, we must ask legislators to vote NO on HR 5985 in its current form until the special interest provision is removed so that Congress can pass a clean Veterans benefits extenders bill on time as usual.

Introduced late Fri., Sept. 9, HR 5985 includes a controversial special-interest provision that is not an extender of an expiring Veterans benefits authority like the rest of the bill. This provision, Sec. 415, would place a one-year moratorium against the Veterans Health Administration expanding Veterans access to care through Full Practice Authority for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) – even though such a CRNA Full Practice policy is consistent with that used by our U.S. Armed Forces and with Forward Surgical Teams.

- Unlike the rest of HR 5985, the Sec. 415 is a special-interest provision and is not an extender of an expiring Veterans benefits provision
- It is a bad precedent that makes this year's Veterans benefits extenders package and any future package at risk of being bogged down by Washington politics and other lawmakers' special-interest pet projects
- It opens up votes on contentious CRNA-anesthesiologist issues.

The issue of CRNA Full Practice Authority is already part of a public notice-and-comment public rulemaking process involving all Advanced Practice Registered Nursing (APRN) services that has been underway for years and which has engaged many public stakeholders. We support finalizing and implementing this important rule as proposed so that Veterans wait times for care can be reduced and they can benefit from expanded access to excellent healthcare that they have earned and deserve. Expanding Veterans access to care by VHA CRNAs and all APRNs in this way is supported by:

- Recommendations of the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine), the VA Independent Assessment, and the blue-ribbon Commission on Care;
- Several leading Veterans groups, including the Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), AMVETS, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), Military Officers Association

of America (MOAA), and the Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA), plus the AARP with its 3.5 million Veteran members. One of our nation's most recognizable Veterans, Sen. Bob Dole, has written in support of the proposal as well;

- The American Hospital Association and many nursing and healthcare organizations; and,
- More than 80 members of Congress who have cosponsored HR 1247 (Graves R-MO, Schakowsky D-IL) and S 2279 (Merkley D-OR, and Rounds R-SD).

Please request that leadership pull HR 5985 in its current form from the suspension calendar so that the special-interest Sec. 415 can be removed and the bill can pass in regular order ensuring timely benefits for our Veterans. If HR 5985 is not pulled from the suspension calendar, we ask legislators to vote NO so that Sec. 415 can be removed from the bill, and it can be reintroduced and passed cleanly with bipartisan support.

Thank you. If you have any questions, please contact Frank Purcell at the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, fpurcell@aanadc.com.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Nursing (AAN)
American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA)
American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP)
American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)
American Nurses Association (ANA)
American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE)
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association (GAPNA)
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP)
National Black Nurses Association (NBNA)
National League for Nursing (NLN)