

# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN MIKE BOST

## The Veterans Accessibility Advisory Committee Act of 2024

### Background:

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has responsibilities to disabled veterans under the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, the *Architectural Barriers Act of 1968*, the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Integrated Digital Experience Act*, and other laws that require equal access to benefits, services, information, and facilities for individuals with disabilities. VA serves or employs thousands of veterans with disabilities and has a special obligation to support them. While VA has made some progress in recent years improving accessibility as a result of the *VA Website Accessibility Act of 2019*, [P.L. 116-213], much more needs to be done.

The *Veterans Accessibility Advisory Committee Act of 2024* would require the VA Secretary to create an advisory committee on issues relating to the accessibility of VA benefits, services, and facilities for veterans and employees with mobility impairments, hearing, visual, cognitive, or other disabilities. The advisory committee would be composed of 15 disabled veterans, experts, employees, and veteran service organization representatives. The advisory committee would provide informal consultations and advice to the Secretary and other VA officials, as well as formal reports. The bill would also abolish an inactive or defunct VA advisory committee to control the growth of such advisory committees and ensure resources are being allocated properly.

### The Message:

- Serving disabled veterans is already a critical component of VA's mission, but we must do more to ensure that disabled veterans *always* have a seat at the table to advocate for their rights and unique needs.
- The *Veterans Accessibility Advisory Committee Act of 2024* would establish a permanent advisory committee within VA to allow for direct and regular communication with the Secretary on behalf of disabled veterans.
- We owe so much to those who have made such a big sacrifice and are forever changed due to their service to our nation, and this is a commonsense way to guarantee they can always access the benefits and services they have earned.