

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment that seeks to redirect funds that would otherwise be spent on Department of Veterans Affairs bureaucrats and administrative expenses and puts those monies toward timely service for our veterans.

Although this amendment is a dollar-for-dollar transfer within this bill, which will result in a neutral impact on the bill's budget authority, the amendment will actually decrease budget outlays for 2015 by \$1 million, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office.

The General Administration account for the Department of Veterans Affairs is funded at \$321,591,000. Funds in this account can be spent on things that have nothing to do with administering critical services for our veterans. Examples include things like receptions, conferences, uniforms and excessive travel for bureaucrats.

It is no secret that the VA—like other federal agencies such as the GSA and the IRS—has in recent years abused the trust of the American people by spending exorbitant amounts of money on conferences and travel expenses.

I think we all know the VA has had its share of problems in the past few years.

Meanwhile, wait times for claims processing and appeals processing are horrendous.

The most recent report put forth from the VA indicates there are almost 600,000 veterans claims pending with the VA. Even more troubling is the fact that 319,363 claims have been pending for more than 125 days.

Many of our veterans are simply giving up.

They're either giving up on trying to obtain the benefits they deserve, or worse, some of them give up on life altogether.

It is a travesty, and this appalling trend must be reversed.

It is disheartening to me that such wasteful spending occurs while veterans are crying out for help.

It is distressing that it occurs while veterans are taking their own lives.

And it is truly disturbing that it occurs when we have veterans dying as they wait for care.

I appreciate the Committee's hard work and it's acknowledgement of the importance of reducing the backlog in this bill. Having said that, I think we can do more and should focus on prioritizing funding for efforts that will lead to timelier care for our nation's heroes as opposed to administrative expenses.

That is why I propose redirecting 1% of the funds in the General Administration account away from things like funding for conference expenses and bureaucrats, and shifting these funds towards reducing the VA backlog.

It is unfair to say that all VA employees and officials have abused the trust of the American people and the veterans they are meant to serve.

There are many within this department who work tirelessly to get through their claims and streamline processes—and to those people, I thank you.

But our veterans and the American taxpayers are not pleased with the overall production level at the VA. It is time to remember and act on the mission at hand: serving our veterans who have given so much for this nation.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support passage of my commonsense amendment, and with that Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.