The American Legion

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OFFICE OF THE
NATIONAL COMMANDER

August 1, 2017

The Honorable Greg Walden, Chairman
Energy & Commerce Committee
United States House of Representatives
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walden:

On behalf of the more than 2 million members of The American Legion, we are pleased to support H.R. 3557, *The Doctors for Veterans Act*.

This legislation, as written, will amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the number of health care professionals employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) by improving the VA Education Debt Reduction Program. The Education Debt Reduction Program aims to help the VA recruit and retain providers to get our veterans access to quality care in a timely manner.

The Doctors for Veterans Act increases the maximum student loan benefit available to VA doctors and brings those benefits in line with National Health Service Corps (NHSC) benefits. This will help address the VA's provider shortage by improving their ability to recruit and retain providers, and ultimately improve access to quality care for our nation's veterans. The student loan benefits offered through the NHSC are significantly greater than those offered by VA, even though our nation's veterans are clearly "underserved" – wait times and backlogs have plagued the Department and hampered veterans' access to care.

Through American Legion Resolution No. 115, *Department of Veterans Affairs Recruitment and Retention,* which was passed at our 2016 National Convention the Legion supports legislation addressing the recruitment and retention challenges that the Department of Veterans Affairs faces regarding pay disparities among those physicians and medical specialists who are providing direct health care to our nation's veterans.

The American Legion supports H.R. 3557 and applauds your leadership in addressing this issue facing our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schmidt

CHARLES E. SCHMIDT
National Commander