



Thomas M. Conway
International President

March 21, 2023

Via Email

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: United Steelworkers supports H.R. 984, the “Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act”.

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 850,000 members of the United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union (United Steelworkers or USW), I write to urge you to co-sponsor H.R. 984, the “Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach (CVSO) Act”. This bipartisan legislation authorizes additional resources to expand the work of county veterans service officers (CVSOs), who are often the best resource on the ground to assist veterans in securing the benefits they have earned.

Right now, many veterans do not access all of their earned benefits because they do not have the proper information or knowledge on how to navigate the benefits process. Out of 19 million veterans in the United States, only about 9.6 million are enrolled in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care, 5.3 million receive disability compensation, and 3.6 million are active VA home loan participants — with other VA programs showing similar rates of underutilization.¹ To reduce benefit underutilization and increase awareness of services, the CVSO Act will strengthen county veterans service officers’ efforts to conduct outreach and provide support to underserved veterans, which can improve overall health and wellness.

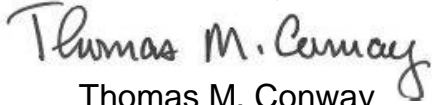
County veterans service officers are local county employees who are nationally accredited by the VA to prepare, present, and prosecute VA claims; provide assistance on a range of benefits; and are often the first to inform veterans about their eligibility for important VA programs and services. They also help enroll veterans into the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and provide assistance on a range of benefits, including service-connected disability compensation, VA home loans, education benefits, and job placement assistance.

¹ [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#), “Department of Veterans Affairs Statistics at a Glance”, December 31, 2021.

The CVSO Act will authorize competitive grants to expand the work of CVSOs or comparable entities. The VA will award grants to states in order to improve outreach to veterans; enhance the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of veterans' benefits claims; hire additional CVSOs; and train CVSOs for VA accreditation. To receive funds, a state must apply including a detailed plan for the use of these funds, how they will meet underserved veterans' needs, and other information. The VA must prioritize awarding grants in areas with a critical shortage of county or tribal veterans service officers, areas with high rates of suicide among veterans, and areas with high rates of referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.

The CVSO Act passed in the House during the 117th Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support², and the United Steelworkers strongly urges you to co-sponsor this important legislation.

Sincerely,


Thomas M. Conway
International President

² [H.R. 4601 - 117th Congress](#), Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach Act, Last Action December 5, 2022.