



# Rep. Tom Emmer on Emmer Supports Essential Veterans Bills

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## **\*\*REP. TOM EMMER:**

\*\* Hello, everyone. Congressman Tom Emmer here. This week, oh, no. Washington, D.C. was hit with a snowstorm. That's what they called it. But this much. Back in Minnesota, we would have called it just another Tuesday in February. But don't worry. Don't worry. The federal government made sure that everybody had plenty of time to get to work. They delayed everything by three hours. Well, not here. Not here. Nope. The Minnesotans in this office working for you, we were all here right away in the morning. And by the way, people who were here to visit other folks, they came to see us. So we were open. Open for business, just like a Minnesotan should be. Now, last week, you might remember we talked about the defense appropriations bill that we passed. This week, we continue the theme here in Congress by passing bills that will benefit our nation's veterans. While our nation seems largely divided these days, there are certainly a few things on which we can all agree. One of those is that our veterans deserve timely and quality care from the institutions designed to help them. Our nation's heroes have sacrificed so much, and they deserve nothing but the best. That's why this week, we came together to pass several bills to ensure that our veterans are taken better care of. We passed the VA Accountability First Act of 2017. Despite the many wonderful individuals currently employed at the VA, this agency has unfortunately had less than a stellar reputation due to the actions of a few bad employees who haven't been held accountable. In fact, the VA's civil service rules have made it near impossible for the department to determine any employee who has committed the worst of infractions. To give you a few examples, due to these ridiculous rules in the past, the VA has had trouble firing a nurse who participated in a veteran's surgery while intoxicated, and also an employee who played a role in an armed robbery. You have to ask yourself, how is this possible? While it's infuriating that something of this magnitude is even a problem, the VA Accountability First Act will remedy this massive problem by giving the VA Secretary more power to fire any employee, including senior executive service employees, for any transgression or misconduct. We also passed a bill to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. According to the 2016 Best Places to Work survey, the VA was unfortunately ranked second to last in large agencies, second to last in effective leadership, and dead last in pay. If we want our veterans to receive quality care, the quality care they deserve, we must ensure that the best and the brightest are recruited to work at the VA. In order to achieve that, this bill will create staffing and recruitment programs so the VA has the ability to pick from the best contenders. It will also create a recruiting database to make more individuals aware of open positions at the VA, as well as open opportunities for job training and promotions for current employees. With the St. Cloud VA located in our district, and all the great veterans that are residents of this Minnesota 6th Congressional District in the great state of Minnesota, we've made veterans health care a top priority since I arrived in Congress, and I intend to continue that as we go forward. If there's anything that you would like to see us do to support our nation's heroes as we go forward, please don't hesitate to let us know. Thanks for listening, and have a great weekend.



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