



9000
Machinists
Place
Upper
Marlboro, MD
20772-2687

(301) 967-
4500
golAM.org



Office of the International President

September 3, 2025

Dear Congressman Hoyer,

On behalf of the IAM Union, we respectfully urge your support in reforming and centralizing the Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterinary Health Insurance Benefit (VHIB) program. This benefit is vital to Veterans who rely on service dogs for mobility, hearing, visual, and mental health support, yet its current structure fails to meet the needs of those it was designed to serve.

The IAM represents nearly 600,000 active and retired members across North America. We represent workers in the federal government, transportation and are the largest defense and aerospace union in the United States. For over 130 years, our union has fought for dignity, justice, and improved quality of life for working people. We are the first labor organization in our country recognized by the VA as a Veterans Service Organization and we believe that those who have served our country deserve streamlined access to the benefits they've earned, especially when it comes to life-saving service animals.

Currently, VHIB applications are processed through local VA Medical Centers' Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) departments. This decentralized model has led to inconsistent decisions, delays, and confusion. Many Veterans report being denied coverage simply because local staff are unaware of the benefit's existence.

A Change.org petition launched by a medically retired Air Force Veteran with PTSD highlights this issue. After receiving a service dog in November 2022 from Guide Dogs of America – Tender Loving Canine, the Veteran waited over a year for VHIB approval only to be told the benefit didn't exist. This experience is not isolated, and the petition has garnered over 25,000 verified signatures calling for reform.

IAM supports the petition's proposed actions:

- Establish a dedicated VA department to manage VHIB applications.
- Ensure staff are trained and informed about VHIB eligibility and procedures.
- Expand coverage to include mental health conditions as a standalone qualifying disability.
- Create a uniform, transparent process accessible to all Veterans.

We believe these changes will promote fairness, reduce administrative burdens, and ensure that Veterans who rely on service dogs receive the care they deserve. As a union committed to justice and solidarity, we stand with not only our Veteran members and their families, but Veterans around this great nation in demanding a system that works.

Congressman Hoyer, your leadership and longstanding commitment to Veterans, makes you a key voice in this effort. We respectfully urge your office to engage with the Department of Veterans Affairs to explore legislative or administrative solutions that centralize and strengthen the VHIB program.

Thank you for your continued service and advocacy. IAM is ready to support this initiative in any way we can.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Bryant", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian Bryant
IAM
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT