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Specially Adaptive Housing Legislation Passes House, Ensures Access for Blinded Veterans

(Alexandria, Virginia) The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) today recognized the passage of H.R. 3504, the Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019. The bill was passed under unanimous consent by members of Congress.

“BVA considers the passage of this bill to be a true milestone for blinded veterans,” said BVA National President Dr. Thomas Zampieri. “For the first time, blinded veterans will be included in the Specially Adaptive Housing program, thus ensuring access to the technology necessary for greater independence in daily living.”

The Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019 allows disabled veterans to apply for housing grants that will be applied to adaptive home equipment specific to their disabilities. The legislation now includes blinded veterans under eligibility rules for the housing grants.

“This update to Specially Adaptive Housing will bring about a meaningful change in the quality of life for many of our blinded veterans who have sacrificed so much and have indeed earned this opportunity,” said Dr. Zampieri. “They can now live comfortably in their own homes with the adaptive technology that was previously not available or accessible to them because of the unaffordable, out-of-pocket costs.”

A coordinated advocacy campaign that included several organizations brought attention to the components of the bill, prior to its passage, that were critical to blinded veterans.

“We express thanks to Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12) for sponsoring this critical piece of legislation on behalf of disabled veterans, which now includes blinded veterans,” said BVA Executive Director Donald D. Overton, Jr. “We also recognize the support of House Veterans Affairs Committee Ranking Member Phil Roe (R-TN-1) and Representative Mike Levin (D-CA-49), as well as the efforts of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA-12) and the entire House leadership in placing the legislation on the calendar and sending it on to the White House.”

The Blinded Veterans Association is the only congressionally chartered Veterans Service Organization serving veterans with vision loss. The organization promotes opportunities for individual blinded veterans and their service providers to view and try out the latest adaptive technology and tools. The organization has successfully advocated for their needs since World War II. For more information about BVA and its services, call toll-free 800-669-7079 or visit bva.org.