

# Ahead Of Veterans Day, Duckworth Introduces Comprehensive Package To Help Stop Servicemember And Veteran Deportation

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Ahead of Veterans Day, combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)—a member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee—

renewed her push to protect and support immigrant Veterans and servicemembers who have proven they are willing to make tremendous sacrifices to defend our nation. Today, Duckworth reintroduced a package of bills—the *Veterans Visa and Protection Act*, *HOPE Act* and *I-VETS Act*—that would prohibit the deportation of immigrant Veterans who are not violent offenders, provide these Veterans with a pathway to citizenship through their military service and help ensure those who have been deported already can access the VA healthcare services they are entitled to.

“Far too many men and women willing to wear our uniform have been deported by the same nation they sacrificed to defend due to the unnecessary and complex barriers that they faced during the naturalization process,” said Duckworth. “On Veterans Day and every other day, we should be honoring all of our Veterans—including our immigrant servicemembers. That’s why I’m proud to reintroduce this package that would help make it easier for them to become citizens, live with their families and ensure those who have already been deported can come back on U.S. soil to access the life-saving VA care they earned and deserve, but may currently be barred from accessing. These Veterans fought for this country, and it’s past time we fight for them too.”

The following bills to remove barriers to citizenship and healthcare for servicemembers and Veterans were re-introduced today by Senator Duckworth:

- The *Veterans Visa and Protection Act of 2023* would prohibit the deportation of Veterans who are not violent offenders, establish a visa program through which deported Veterans may enter the US as legal permanent residents to become naturalized citizens through military service and extend military and Veterans benefits to those who would be eligible for those benefits if they were not deported.
- The *Healthcare Opportunities for Patriots in Exile (HOPE) Act of 2023* would allow non-violent, deported Veterans the opportunity to temporarily parole back into the United States to seek care from a VA facility.
- The *Immigrant Veterans Eligibility Tracking System (I-VETS) Act of 2023* would identify non-citizens who are currently serving or who have served in the armed forces when they are applying for immigration benefits or when placed in immigration enforcement proceedings.

Once a Veteran is deported, they are usually unable to access the full VA benefits they have earned and would receive if they were still living in the United States. Many have trouble accessing even basic medical care, even though Veterans struggle with higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and physical health problems like chronic pain than the general population. Many deported Veterans are also separated from their families and their children who live in the U.S., while those deported to Mexico or Central America are especially vulnerable to threats from gangs and drug cartels due to their military experience.

“I’ve met too many immigrants who served in uniform that were shamefully deported from our country. We as a nation have a responsibility to keep the promises we made to care for our service men and women in return for their sacrifices, including creating a clear process for naturalization,” said U.S. Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-03), who is leading the House version of the *Veterans Visa and Protection Act*. “I’m proud to reintroduce the Veterans Visa and Protection Act with Senator Duckworth to safeguard veterans from deportation, bring those whom have been deported home and honor the benefits they are owed. It’s past time to codify protections for our immigrant veterans and end this disgraceful practice.”

Duckworth has been active in protecting Veterans from deportation and helping those who have been deported gain citizenship and access to important VA services. In 2021, Duckworth [released a report](#) that details the history of immigrants enlisting in the U.S. military, the complicated path to military naturalization, barriers deported Veterans face in accessing Veterans Affairs’ benefits, recommended policy solutions and much more.

Duckworth also previously introduced the [Strengthening Citizenship Services for Veterans Act](#), legislation that would ensure deported Veterans who have successfully completed the preliminary naturalization process can attend their citizenship interview at a port of entry, embassy or consulate without navigating the complex process of advance parole.

In 2019, Duckworth [traveled to Tijuana, Mexico](#), on Veterans Day to meet with a group of Veterans who have been deported to hear about their efforts to access the VA healthcare benefits they’ve earned.