

## TAKE ACTION: The House of Representatives Moves to Vote on H.R.3504 — Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019



*By Retired Army Capt. Ryan Kules — Combat Stress Recovery Director, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP)*

I was a 24-year-old U.S. Army armor captain deployed to Taji, Iraq, when my life changed forever. On Nov. 29, 2005, the vehicle I was in was struck by an improvised explosive device. I lost two of my soldiers, Sgts. Jerry Mills and Donald Hasse, and I lost my right arm and left leg.

I medically retired from the Army at the age of 26, after 18 months of challenging physical and mental recovery at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. I had my whole life ahead of me, but I had to re-learn how to navigate my environment. This meant making my home environment more navigable too: widened doorways, ramps, reworked kitchen and bathrooms, among other expensive adaptations.

Thankfully, the government provided assistance through the Department of Veterans Affairs' [Specially Adapted Housing \(SAH\) grant](#) program. Despite the usefulness of that program, it had two key issues.

First, it didn't come close to covering all the costs of adapting my home. At that time, the SAH benefit was just over \$64,000, but the modifications I needed totaled more than \$100,000.

Second, the SAH grant meets the needs of veterans like me at only one moment in time. I am now 38 years old; my family has grown, and my wife and I are blessed to have three great kids. But that change in life meant we needed a larger house, and because I used the SAH grant to cover adaptations in our previous home, I was ineligible to use the grant again. We paid more than \$90,000 out of pocket to modify our new home.

This won't be the last time either; while I'm active and get around well now, I know that won't always be the case. A day is coming when I will need to use a wheelchair more and potentially transition to a motorized wheelchair.

The SAH [benefit](#) has to evolve to meet the changing needs of disabled veterans and help them at various stages of their lives. This is why [H.R. 3504 — Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019](#) is so important; it breaks down barriers and helps veterans access the SAH benefits they've earned on the battlefield.

This critical piece of legislation will fully reinstate SAH benefits to eligible veterans every 10 years to

accommodate moving and normal life changes. This bill will also:

- Reinstates grant benefits to eligible veterans *every 10 years* to accommodate moving and normal life changes *for their lifetime*.
- Increase the number of times the benefit can be accessed from three to six.
- Increase the total amount of the benefit for purchasing or remodeling a house with special features.

Nearly 2,000 veterans have used the SAH program. Expanding SAH eligibility qualifications will go a long way in helping many more disabled veterans adapt their current or future homes for the changes that life can bring. Veterans should have the peace of mind of knowing that wherever we choose to live — just like anybody else — we will have that opportunity without bearing large financial burdens.

WWP strongly supports this bill and has been advocating for its passage for some time now. Congress is voting on this bill soon — and we need your help to get it over the finish line by [taking action today](#). I ask that, on behalf of all severely wounded veterans, you [contact your elected officials](#) and ask them to support H.R. 3504.

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### **About Wounded Warrior Project**

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers — helping them achieve their highest ambition. [Learn more](#).

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