

The Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014

Strengthen VA to Meet Veterans' Needs

Bolster VA Staffing: The legislation would provide the VA funds to hire additional primary and specialty health care providers along with other clinical staff to increase the department's capacity to provide high-quality health care to our nation's veterans. The measure also would provide enhanced incentives to attract more doctors and nurses and other health care professionals to the VA. [VA's Access to Care Audit](#) found that the need for additional doctors, nurses and other medical providers was the highest barrier or challenge to access to care.

Add Space for Veterans Care: The VA's physical infrastructure plays a significant role in its ability to provide timely, quality care to veterans in a safe environment. The legislation would provide funds to enter emergency leases for facilities that would directly improve veterans' access to care.

Authorize New Clinics: The legislation would authorize VA to enter into 27 major medical facility leases in 18 states and Puerto Rico. In many instances, these leases would improve access to care closer to veterans' homes and increase the availability of specialty-care services in these locations.

Expand Access to Care

Veterans Choice Card: The legislation would allow veterans who have had to wait more than 30 days for an appointment with the VA to seek care from a private physician, a community health center, a Department of Defense health care facility or an Indian Health Center. Veterans who live more than 40 miles from a VA facility also would be eligible for this program.

Support Veterans and their Families

Sexual Assault: The legislation would improve the delivery of care for veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military.

Survivor Benefits: The Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship would be expanded to include surviving spouses of service members killed in the line of duty, so that they can go further their education, rebuild their lives and take care of their families.

In-State Tuition for Post-9/11 GI Bill: The legislation would let all veterans eligible for education benefits under the Post 9/11 GI qualify for in-state tuition.

TBI Treatment The bill would extend a program about to expire which provides housing for veterans struggling with traumatic brain injuries.

Remove Incompetent Senior Officials

Authority to Fire VA Executives for Misconduct: The VA secretary would be given the authority to immediately remove incompetent senior executives based on poor job performance or misconduct. An expedited appeals process through the Merit Systems Protection Board would prevent political firings or other abuses of the new personnel power, such as retaliation against whistle blowers.

The Cost of War

“Planes and tanks and guns are a cost of war,” Sen. Bernie Sanders said. “So is taking care of the men and women who use those weapons and fight our battles.”

The conference committee agreement would cost approximately \$17 billion. The measure would provide \$10 billion for veterans to receive health care outside of the VA. It includes \$5 billion to bolster’s VA’s in-house capacity to treat veterans. An estimated \$2 billion would be allotted for additional programs, such as the 27 health care leases, expanded college benefits and scholarships for surviving spouses. The measure would offset some of the costs with approximately \$5 billion in savings from programs within the jurisdiction of the Senate and House Veterans’ Affairs Committees.