

GUARANTEE THE CARE AND SERVICES PROMISED TO OUR VETERANS

The Veterans' Health Care Freedom Act



Expanding the health care options we give to our veterans is key to meeting the changing needs of today and tomorrow's veterans. Concerned Veterans for America supports the Veterans Health Care Freedom Act to empower veterans with greater choice and flexibility to access health care where it best meets their needs.

THE ISSUE

The VA MISSION Act significantly expanded health care choices for veterans through its new community care access standards, but veterans still do not have the same options as most Americans for where and when they access care.

Despite the MISSION Act's expanded choices, health care access has still become increasingly difficult for veterans. The VA cancelled [millions](#) of appointments due to the COVID-19 pandemic but [actively discourages](#) veterans from seeking community care. The Veterans Health Care Freedom Act will streamline access to treatment and fully implement recommendation #1 from the bipartisan [Commission on Care](#), creating a fully integrated health care system where veterans can choose the health care provider that best meets their needs.

POLICY SOLUTION

The Veterans Health Care Freedom Act by Sen. Marsha Blackburn and Rep. Andy Biggs will create a pilot program to grant full health care choice for veterans enrolled in health care benefits through the Veterans Health Administration. This pilot program would operate similarly to the current urgent care benefit created under the VA MISSION Act and includes maximum flexibility for a veteran to receive care at any in-network facility at the VA or in the community. This bill will remove the barriers many veterans face in accessing care closer to home or at higher quality facilities in their local communities. The legislation includes the following:

FULL CHOICE PILOT PROGRAM | Directs the VA to utilize the Center for Innovation for Care and Payment authorized by the VA MISSION Act to create a three-year pilot program to grant full health care choice. By using existing authorities in the law, the pilot program removes the [set of criteria](#) in the VA MISSION Act for community care eligibility and grants full choice to veterans in select pilot program regions. The program will take effect one year after enactment of the bill.

CARE COORDINATION | Eligible veterans in the pilot program will be free to choose a community provider (can be either a primary care provider, or in certain cases, a specialty care provider) to coordinate their care. The VA is required to set up a system to effectively aid in coordination of care.

LOCATION | The pilot program will operate in a minimum of four Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) selected by the VA Secretary.

TYPES OF CARE | Veterans in pilot VISNs will be eligible to receive health care in the community for primary care, mental health, and specialty care from any Veterans Community Care Program in-network providers without needing to seek out the VA's pre-approval. This will extend the same type of access currently granted to veterans for urgent care to all types of health care.

FULL CHOICE | Four years after enactment, the pilot program would expand permanently nationwide for all eligible veterans.

Contacts:

Dominic Nordel - DNordel@cv4a.org
Federal Legislative Liaison

Lauren Stewart - LStewart@cv4a.org
Senior Federal Affairs Liaison

Tyler Koteskey - TKoteskey@cv4a.org
Policy Director

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