

EMPOWER VETERANS WITH ACCESS TO QUALITY AND TIMELY HEALTH CARE

Protect and Expand Veterans' Health Care Choices

America's veterans have earned access to timely and quality health care through their service. Our nation can best honor this promise by empowering veterans with the freedom to choose the providers that best meet their needs, whether at VA facilities or through community care providers. Empowering veterans with control over their treatment choices can be a model for better health care for all Americans.

THE ISSUE The Department of Veterans Affairs is failing too many veterans, not because it lacks resources or capable providers, but because the agency has focused on its own bureaucratic interests over the well-being of the veterans it was created to serve.

For years, the [VA undermined veterans' access](#) to community care options to drive more patients to Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities, violating clear access standards created by the VA MISSION Act. VA officials created a series of barriers to community care access, including [waiving access standards](#) without the veteran's consent, allowing administrators to [overturn VA clinicians'](#) MISSION Act-authorized community care referrals, and [misrepresenting wait times](#) through obsolete measurements with no legal basis.

POLICY SOLUTIONS **CODIFY COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS STANDARDS** Veterans deserve certainty about their treatment options. Legislators should codify existing community care [access standards](#) to protect community care access prevent future VA leadership from restricting it without Congressional approval.

BENEFIT FLEXIBILITY FOR DISABLED VETERANS Veterans with the highest disability ratings should have maximum flexibility to seek coverage that best meets their individual needs. Congress should allow veterans with service-connected disabilities the option to enroll in TRICARE Select or TRICARE for Life, if Medicare eligible, rather than the VA system.

DATA-DRIVEN MODERNIZATION The average age of a VA facility is [60 years old](#). Congress should support a comprehensive, data-driven process to modernize VHA facilities and ensure limited VA resources are spent most in line with veterans' needs, while preserving existing access to care.

FULL HEALTH CARE CHOICE The best way to ensure that the VA cannot put its bureaucratic interests over veterans' wellbeing is to remove its opportunity to interfere in veterans' health care choices to begin with. Under "full choice," veterans would be able to use their health benefits at VHA facilities or community care providers at their preference without VA preapproval.

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