



H.R. 2818 – VETERANS' EPILEPSY TREATMENT ACT OF 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 2818 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Ed Perlmutter (D-CO) on June 21, 2007. The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs agreed to the bill, as amended, by voice vote on June 11, 2008.

H.R. 2818 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on June 24, 2008.

****Note: Similar legislation, S. 2004, was introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) on August 3, 2007. S. 2004 was subsequently amended and included in S. 2162, which passed the Senate by unanimous consent on June 3, 2008.*

SUMMARY

H.R. 2818 directs the Secretary of Veteran's Affairs (VA) to establish five Epilepsy Centers of Excellence within the Veterans Health Administration and the VA. The neurologists and neurosurgeons employed at these Centers will perform research on the diagnosis, treatment, and long term effects of epilepsy and provide clinical care. The bill also requires the Secretary to establish a national network of Department of Health officials with expertise in the field of neurology and related disciplines to provide a nationwide system of coordinated care for veterans with epilepsy.

During the mark up of H.R. 2818, an amendment was offered that requires the Centers to be co-located with five VA Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers which are located in California, Minnesota, Virginia, Florida, and Texas. Additionally, the legislation requires the Secretary to appoint a national coordinator to oversee operations at these Centers and coordinate the national network of Department of Health officials with expertise in neurology.

H.R. 2818 authorizes \$5 million for each of fiscal years 2009 – 2013.

BACKGROUND

According to the National Institutes of Health ([NIH](#)), epilepsy is a disorder in which clusters of nerve cells in the brain can signal abnormally. The disruption of normal neurological activity caused by epilepsy can cause strange sensations, emotions, and behavior to occur, including convulsions, muscle spasms, and loss of consciousness. Causes of epilepsy can range from illness, to brain damage resulting from head injuries, to abnormal brain development. Approximately 80 percent of persons diagnosed with epilepsy can effectively control their seizures with the use of modern medicine and undergoing surgical procedures.

The Veterans Health Administration estimates that there are approximately 89,000 veterans with epilepsy enrolled in the VA Health Care System. Of these veterans, 37,000 have service-related cases of epilepsy. Currently, there are seven epilepsy monitoring sites operated by the VA. These sites provide epileptic veterans with medical care such as invasive monitoring and implanting nerve stimulators, as well as other procedures for the treatment of epilepsy.

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) is a medical center collaboratively administered by the Department of Defense, the VA Health Care System, and civilian partners. The DVBIC is headquartered at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center located in Bethesda, Maryland. The DVBIC was created as a multi-site medical care and research center serving active duty military members and veterans with TBI. According to the DVBIC, 64 percent of the soldiers wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom sustained blast injuries, many of which result in TBI.



[Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center website](#)

COST

The Congressional Budget Office “estimates that implementing H.R. 2818 would cost \$25 million over the 2009-2013 period.”

[Full CBO cost estimate for H.R. 2818](#)

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information contact Justin Hanson at (202) 226-2302.