



H.R. 2874- Veterans' Health Care Improvement Act of 2007

H.R. 2874 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 Michael Michaud (D-ME) on January 4, 2007 and was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and reported out by voice vote.

H.R. 2874 is expected to be considered on the Floor of the House of Representatives on July 30, 2007.

Summary

H.R. 2874 provides several grants and extends many programs in the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA). There are grants provided for rural areas to transport veterans to medical facilities and for non-profit groups that specialize in assisting veterans' returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF/OEF). It also helps to ensure that female veterans' enrolled in domiciliary care programs are being properly cared for.

It extends counseling programs and makes adjustments to how veterans' can be billed for services. Lastly, it requires the VA to provide assistance to low income veterans' while transitioning to permanent housing.

Background

H.R. 2874 requires the VA to establish a grant program for non-profit groups that assist in therapeutic readjustment and rehabilitation to OIF/OEF veterans. It requires the VA to certify that the non-profits receiving grants are qualified to engage in this type of counseling. The grants would be limited to \$100,000 per calendar year until September 20, 2011. The total appropriations for these grants would be \$2 million. Included in this section is the requirement that the VA submit yearly reports as to the number of veterans enrolled and the success of the programs. These reports would be submitted to House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

It authorizes grants for rural areas and communities to provide transportation of veterans' to VA medical facilities. The grants would be given to non-profits, rural veteran' organizations and programs that assist state organizations and would used for transportation. The grants would be

limited to \$50,000 and authorizes appropriations of \$3 million for each fiscal year from 2008 to 2010.

This legislation extends the VA's authority to collect a \$10 per diem for certain veterans' receiving VA hospital care. It also extends the VA's authority to bill a veterans' third party insurance provider for non-service-connected disabilities.

H.R. 2874 requires the VA to provide readjustment counseling and mental health services for OIF/OEF veterans through programs that assist in reaching out to the veterans' peers. This would include contracting out to mental health facilities that are not well serviced by the VA.

The legislation also provides financial assistance and support services for very low-income veteran families that are transitioning to permanent services. It authorizes \$25,000,000 to be appropriated and requires that less than \$750,000 be used for technical assistance.

It also lowers the time a homeless veteran has to be homeless before they can receive dental care. Previously the time was 60 consecutive days of being homeless and H.R. 2874 lowers that time to 30 consecutive days.

CBO Estimate

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the net effect of implementing the remainder of H.R. 2874 would be to reduce costs for veteran's health care by \$22 million in 2008 and to increase costs by \$199 million over the 2008-1012 period. Enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues.

Staff Contact

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