



Fact Sheet: The Veterans Access, Choice & Accountability Act Of 2014 (H.R. 3230)

Improving Access and Enhancing Quality of Care

The bipartisan Veterans Access, Choice & Accountability Act would immediately address the VA wait-time backlogs.

- This bill would allow veterans who are unable to secure an appointment at a VA medical facility within 30 days, or veterans who live more than 40 miles from a VA medical facility, to seek care at a non-VA health care provider.
- Non-VA health providers include private physicians, federally qualified health centers, Department of Defense health care facilities, and Indian Health Service clinics.
- The legislation would require VA to provide eligible veterans with a Veterans Choice Card to facilitate securing non-VA care.
- The bill would provide \$10 billion for the newly-established “Veterans Choice Fund,” which would cover the cost of offering access to non-VA health care providers.
- The measure would also require an independent assessment of VA medical care and establish a Commission on Care to evaluate access to care throughout the VA health care system.

Hiring More Health Professionals

The bipartisan Veterans Access, Choice & Accountability Act would address the shortage of health care professionals at VA facilities.

- This legislation would provide \$5 billion for VA to hire more primary and specialty care physicians and medical staff.

Expanding VA’s Capacity

The bipartisan Veterans Access, Choice & Accountability Act would improve VA’s physical infrastructure so it can accommodate and quickly treat all veterans seeking care.

- Part of the \$5 billion to hire more health care professionals would go towards improving VA's physical infrastructure.
- Additionally, the legislation would provide \$1.5 billion for the VA to lease 27 major medical facilities located in 18 states and Puerto Rico.

State: City	Type of Facility		State: City	Type of Facility
AZ: Phoenix	CBOC		MO: Cape Girardeau	CBOC
CA: Chico	CBOC		NJ: Brick	CBOC
CA: Chula Vista	CBOC		NM: Albuquerque	Research & Pharma.
CA: Redding	CBOC		NE: Lincoln	CBOC
CA: San Diego	CBOC		OK: Tulsa	CBOC
CT: West Haven	Homeless Drop-In Center		PR: Ponce	Outpatient Clinic
FL: New Port Richey	Outpatient Clinic		SC: Charleston	Primary Care/Dental
GA: Cobb County	CBOC		SC: Myrtle Beach	CBOC Consolidation
HI: Leeward Oahu	Outpatient Health Center		TN: Chattanooga	Multispecialty Clinic
IL: Hines	Research Facility		TX: San Antonio	Lease Consolidation
KS: Johnson County	CBOC		TX: Tyler	CBOC
LA: Lafayette	CBOC		TX: Houston	Research Facility
LA: Lake Charles	CBOC		TX: Lubbock	CBOC
MA: Worcester	CBOC			

(CBOC = Community-Based Outpatient Clinic)

Holding VA Personnel Accountable

The bipartisan Veterans Access, Choice & Accountability Act would streamline measures to ensure accountability among incompetent or corrupt senior managers.

- The legislation would authorize VA to fire or demote Senior Executive Service (SES) employees and Title 38 SES equivalent employees for poor performance or misconduct.
- The bill would provide an expedited appeals process for terminated employees to prevent political firings and protect whistleblowers from retaliation.

Expanding Care For Victims Of Sexual Assault

The bipartisan Veterans Access, Choice & Accountability Act would expand access to services for victims of military sexual trauma.

- The legislation would authorize the delivery of care, including counseling and other services, to veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma during active duty or inactive duty training, including members of the National Guard and Reserves.

- The bill would also require the VA and Department of Defense (DOD) to annually assess the transition and continuum of care from VA and DOD for individuals who have experienced military sexual trauma.

Making College More Affordable For Veterans

The bipartisan Veterans Access, Choice & Accountability Act would expand education benefits.

- The bill would require public colleges to provide in-state tuition to veterans and eligible dependents in order for the school to remain eligible to receive G.I. Bill education payments.
- The legislation would expand the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John D. Fry Scholarship Program to provide full Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits to spouses of service members who died in the line of duty after 9/11.

Congressional Budget Office Estimate

- The legislation includes approximately \$5 billion in offsets.
- Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the bipartisan Veterans Access, Choice & Accountability Act would cost roughly \$10 billion over 10 years.

Senate Democrats: Fighting for America's Veterans

No Veteran Leaving the Battlefield Should Have to Fight For a Job

VOW TO HIRE HEROES ACT

- Senate Democrats passed the VOW to Hire Heroes Act in 2011, which addresses the challenge of unemployment among veterans and helps rural veterans secure jobs by offering tax incentives to employers who hire veterans.
- The VOW To Hire Heroes Act is a comprehensive employment, job training and tax credit package. It provides up to \$5,600 in tax credits to businesses that hire unemployed veterans, as well as up to a \$9,600 credit for hiring unemployed veterans with service-connected disabilities. The tax credits expired at the end of 2013 and need to be renewed. S. 2260, EXPIRE Act of 2014, introduced by Senator Wyden on April 28, 2014, contains provisions to extend these tax credits through December 31, 2015.
- The law also expands education and training opportunities for older veterans by providing nearly 100,000 unemployed veterans of past wars with up to one-year of additional Montgomery GI benefits towards education or training programs at community colleges or technical schools. This program, known as the Veterans

Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), expired on March 31, 2014. [Vote 204, [11/10/11](#); [DPCC](#); [P.L 112-56](#)]

VETERANS SKILLS TO JOBS ACT

- Senate Democrats passed the Veterans Skills to Jobs Act, which will enable veterans to faster transition to the civilian workforce.
- Veterans from three military specialties – combat arms, motor transport, and medical technicians – make up half of all unemployed veterans.
- The Veteran Skills to Jobs Act cuts the red tape that has prevented these highly skilled veterans from quickly obtaining civilian licenses by requiring federal agencies to recognize relevant military training and skills when certifying veterans - expediting their transition to promising careers. [Defense Business Board, [4/ 19/ 12](#); [P.L. 112-147](#)]

Training for the Next Mission

IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY OF EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS ACT OF 2012

- Senate Democrats passed legislation to increase outreach and transparency to veterans using their military education benefits.
- The Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities For Veterans Act requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop a comprehensive policy to improve outreach and transparency to veterans on information regarding institutions of higher learning and use of their military education benefits
- The Act also prohibits the Secretary from approving an educational institution that provides any commission, bonus, or other incentive payment based on recruitment of students. [[P.L. 112-249](#)]

RESTORING GI BILL FAIRNESS ACT

- Senate Democrats passed legislation to provide certain veterans with more tuition assistance.
- The Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011 authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to pay more than the \$17,500 in tuition and fees under the Post-9/11 GI Bill for certain

students attending private colleges and universities in Arizona, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas in order to ensure they do not face tuition hikes based on the state in which they attend school. [P.L. 112-26]

Expand and Create Opportunities for Veterans in Agriculture

THE AGRICULTURE REFORM, FOOD AND JOBS ACT OF 2013

- Senate Democrats passed the Farm Bill, which includes specific provisions to help veterans start careers as farmers and ranchers. The bill dedicates \$85 million to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, a competitive grant program, and for the first time, requires the Department of Agriculture to make veterans a priority.
- The Farm bill also includes provisions to provide outreach and technical assistance to veteran farmers and includes conservation program opportunities for veterans. [P.L. 113-79]

Health for Heroes

CAMP LEJUNE FAMILIES ACT

- This comprehensive benefits package will help veterans by expanding critical health care programs for veterans, improving claims processing, enhancing efforts to eliminate homelessness among veterans, and providing health care to individuals with certain illnesses and conditions who were stationed at Camp Lejeune, NC several decades ago.
- The legislation also limits picketing of military funerals by banning protests two hours before and after funerals and requires demonstrators to be at least 300 feet away. [P.L. 112-154]

WOMEN VETERANS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2012.

- Senate Democrats worked to ensure that injured servicemembers who have transitioned back to civilian life can access the same fertility treatments offered to those in the service by the Department of Defense and TRICARE.
- This legislation, which passed the Senate on December 13, 2012, would enable severely wounded veterans, as well as eligible dependents and surrogates, to access assisted reproductive technology, such as in vitro fertilization, so that they can start a family. [Fact sheet; S. 3313]

Ensuring That Veterans Have Safe And Secure Housing

HELPING HOMELESS VETERANS ACT OF 2013

- Senate Democrats worked to protect veterans and their family members who are homeless as a result of domestic violence. The Helping Homeless Veterans Act expands the definition of a homeless veteran to include a veteran or veteran's family member who became homeless because that person escaped domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or other life-threatening situations in their homes.
- The bill would also extend VA's ability to provide referral and counseling services, as well as treatment programs for seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans, and certain legal services for these veterans. [[S. 287](#)]

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EXPIRING AUTHORITIES ACT OF 2013

- Senate Democrats continued supporting the nations' dedicated veterans by ensuring that veterans get the benefits they have earned. The Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2013, among other things, provides specially adapted housing assistance for disabled veterans who have difficulty moving about their homes, authorized funding to help disabled veterans train and compete in the Paralympics and authorized the Secretary of Labor and Secretary of Veterans Affairs to support homeless veterans employment, transitional rehousing, and rapid rehousing programs. [[P.L. 113-37](#)]

Making Sure Veterans Receive the Benefits They Deserve

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT

- Senate Democrats made sure America's veterans received the cost-of-living increase they need and deserve.
- The Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2013, an annual adjustment passed by Congress, ensures that veterans' benefits continue to provide meaningful assistance that keeps pace with inflation. Senate Democrats fought to end the practice of rounding down the COLA to the nearest whole dollar – thus putting more money into veterans' pockets. [[P.L. 113- 52](#)]

MILITARY RETIREMENT AND PAY RESTORATION

- Senate Democrats restored the full Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) for military retirees because men and women of our Armed Forces deserve the full compensation and benefits that they have earned through service to their country.
- The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 included a modification to the annual COLA for working-age military retirees' pensions that would have modified the annual COLA for military retirees under age 62 by making the adjustments equal to inflation minus 1 percent. Once retirees reached age 62, their pensions would have been recalculated to the level they would be at if they had always received a full COLA, and those retirees would receive full COLAs in the future equal to the traditional adjustment. The FY14 Omnibus restored full COLA adjustments for disabled military retirees and their survivors.
- The Military Retirement and Pay Restoration Act grandfathered in and protects all current servicemembers and military retirees from the COLA reduction. This legislation made the COLA modification prospective to the retired pay of all servicemembers who join the military after January 1, 2014. [[DPCC Fact Sheet](#); [Vote 281](#); [P.L. 113-67](#); [Vote 53](#); [P.L. 113-82](#)]

VA EXPIRING AUTHORITIES EXTENSION ACT OF 2013

- Senate Democrats continued supporting the nations' dedicated veterans by extending the requirement to provide nursing home care to certain veterans with service-connected disabilities, extending a program that provides outreach, emergency housing, treatment and rehabilitation services for seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans.
- The legislation also authorizes funding to help disabled veterans train and compete in adaptive sporting events. [[P.L. 113-59](#)]