

Union Calendar No. 530

110TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 1527

[Report No. 110-817]

To amend title 38, United States Code, to allow highly rural veterans enrolled in the health system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive covered health services through providers other than those of the Department, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 14, 2007

Mr. MORAN of Kansas (for himself and Mr. LATHAM) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

AUGUST 1, 2008

Additional sponsors: Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, Mr. CUELLAR, Mr. GILLMOR, Mr. TIAHRT, Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. CAMP of Michigan, Mr. DOOLITTLE, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. TERRY, Mr. BOREN, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, Mr. HARE, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mr. WALDEN of Oregon, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. BUYER, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. SIMPSON, and Mr. SHUSTER

AUGUST 1, 2008

Reported with amendments, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on March 14, 2007]

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to allow highly rural veterans enrolled in the health system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive covered health services through providers other than those of the Department, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 *This Act may be cited as the “Rural Veterans Access*
5 *to Care Act”.*

6 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM OF ENHANCED CONTRACT CARE**

7 **AUTHORITY FOR HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF**
8 **VETERANS IN HIGHLY RURAL AREAS.**

9 *(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1703 of title 38, United*
10 *States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following*
11 *new subsection:*

12 *“(e)(1) The Secretary shall conduct a pilot program*
13 *which permits highly rural veterans—*

14 *“(A) who are enrolled in the system of patient*
15 *enrollment established under section 1705(a) of this*
16 *title, and*

1 “(B) who reside within Veterans Integrated Serv-
2 ice Network 1, 15, 18, and 19,
3 to elect to receive covered health services for which such vet-
4 erans are eligible through a non-Department health-care
5 provider.

6 “(2) The election under paragraph (1) shall be made
7 by submitting an application to the Secretary in accord-
8 ance with such regulations as the Secretary prescribes. The
9 Secretary shall authorize such services to be furnished to
10 the veteran pursuant to contracting with such a provider
11 to furnish such services to such veteran.

12 “(3) For purposes of this subsection, a highly rural
13 veteran is one who—

14 “(A) resides in a location that is—

15 “(i) more than 60 miles driving distance
16 from the nearest Department health-care facility
17 providing primary care services, if the veteran is
18 seeking such services;

19 “(ii) more than 120 miles driving distance
20 from the nearest Department health-care facility
21 providing acute hospital care, if the veteran is
22 seeking such care; or

23 “(iii) more than 240 miles driving distance
24 from the nearest Department health-care facility

1 *providing tertiary care, if the veteran is seeking*
2 *such care; or*

3 “(B) *in the case of a veteran who resides in a*
4 *location less than the distance indicated in clause (i),*
5 *(ii), or (iii) of subparagraph (A), as applicable, expe-*
6 *riences such hardship or other difficulties in travel to*
7 *the nearest appropriate Department health-care facil-*
8 *ity that such travel is not in the best interest of the*
9 *veteran, as determined by the Secretary pursuant to*
10 *regulations prescribed for purposes of this subsection.*

11 “(4) *For purposes of this subsection, a covered health*
12 *service is any hospital care, medical service, rehabilitative*
13 *service, or preventative health service authorized to be pro-*
14 *vided by the Secretary under this chapter or any other pro-*
15 *vision of law.*

16 “(5) *For purposes of this subsection, a health-care pro-*
17 *vider is any qualified entity or individual furnishing a cov-*
18 *ered health service.*

19 “(6) *In meeting the requirements of this subsection, the*
20 *Secretary shall develop the functional capability to provide*
21 *for the exchange of medical information between the Depart-*
22 *ment and non-Department health-care providers.*

23 “(7) *This subsection shall apply to covered health serv-*
24 *ices provided during the 3-year period beginning on the*
25 *120th day after the date of the enactment of this subsection.*

1 “(8) Not later than the 30th day after the close of each
2 year of the period described in paragraph (7), the Secretary
3 shall submit a report to the Committees of Veterans’ Affairs
4 of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report
5 which includes—

6 “(A) the Secretary’s assessment of the program
7 under this subsection, including its cost, volume, qual-
8 ity, patient satisfaction, benefit to veterans, and any
9 other findings and conclusions of the Secretary with
10 respect to such program, and

11 “(B) any recommendations that the Secretary
12 may have for—

13 “(i) continuing the program,

14 “(ii) extending the program to other or all
15 service regions of the Department, and

16 “(iii) making the program permanent.”.

17 (b) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
18 fairs shall implement the amendment made by subsection
19 (a) not later than the 120th day after the date of the enact-
20 ment of this Act.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a pilot program to permit certain highly rural veterans enrolled in the health system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive covered health services through providers other than those of the Department.”.

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