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U.S. House of Representatives**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

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VETERANS HEALTH CARE, CAPITAL ASSET, AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2003

S. 1156, AS AMENDED

TITLE: To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and enhance the provision of long-term health care for veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs, to enhance and improve authorities relating to the administration of personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

S. 1156, as amended, would:

TITLE I—HEALTH CARE AUTHORITIES AND RELATED MATTERS

1. Authorize former prisoners of war to receive outpatient dental care from VA, irrespective of the number of days detained in captivity.
2. Eliminate copayments for pharmaceuticals administered to former prisoners of war.
3. Authorize VA to provide veterans who participated in tests conducted by the Department of Defense (DOD) Desert Test Center from 1962 through 1973 higher priority for hospital care, medical services and nursing home care without requirement for proof of service-connection through December 31, 2005.
4. Authorize VA to provide hospital and nursing home care and medical services to certain Filipino World War II veterans of the Philippines Commonwealth Army and former Philippines "New Scouts" who permanently reside in the United States, in the same manner as provided to U.S. veterans.
5. Expand VA authority to provide rehabilitative work skills training and development services, employment support services and job development and placement services.
6. Authorize VA to enter into "provider agreements" with non-VA entities to provide veterans with institutional nursing care or non-institutional extended care in a manner similar to such agreements permitted under the Social Security Act.
7. Extend VA's authority to provide a range of non-institutional extended care services as set forth in Public Law 106-117 through December 31, 2008.
8. Extend the mandate to provide medically necessary, institutional nursing care services to severely service-connected disabled veterans through December 31, 2008.
9. Expand and extend VA authority to conduct a pilot program on assisted living for veterans.
10. Increase funding authorization for each of fiscal years 2004 through 2006 from \$15,000,000 to \$25,000,000 for the provision of specialized mental health services to veterans.

TITLE II—CONSTRUCTION AND FACILITIES MATTERS

1. Increase from \$4,000,000 to \$7,000,000 the threshold that classifies a medical facility construction project as "major construction."
2. Streamline the process and notification requirements in title 38, United States Code, when the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) proposes an enhanced-use lease of VA properties no longer needed for the delivery of care to veterans

3. Authorize individual VHA facilities to be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the development and execution of enhanced-use leases.
4. Simplify the reporting of the Annual Report on Long-Range Health Planning.
5. Authorize \$14,500,000 for the construction of a long-term care facility in Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
6. Authorize \$20,000,000 for the construction of a long-term care facility in Beckley, West Virginia.
7. Authorize \$98,500,000 for the construction of a new bed tower in Chicago, Illinois.
8. Authorize \$48,600,000 for the correction of seismic deficiencies in San Diego, California.
9. Authorize \$50,000,000 for medical care and research renovations in West Haven, Connecticut.
10. Authorize \$45,000,000 for the construction of a VA-Navy outpatient medical care facility in Pensacola, Florida.
11. Authorize a lease in the amount of \$3,000,000 for an outpatient clinic in Charlotte, North Carolina.
12. Authorize a lease in the amount of \$2,879,000 for an outpatient clinic extension in Boston, Massachusetts.
13. Authorize advance planning in the amount of \$26,000,000 for a major medical facility project in Denver, Colorado.
14. Authorize advance planning in the amount of \$9,000,000 for a major medical facility project in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
15. Authorize advance planning in the amount of \$25,000,000 for a major medical facility project in Las Vegas, Nevada.
16. Authorize advance planning in the amount of \$9,000,000 for a major medical facility project in Columbus, Ohio.
17. Authorize advance planning in the amount of \$17,500,000 for a major medical facility project in East Central, Florida.
18. Authorize a total of \$276,600,000 for fiscal year 2004 for the construction of the projects designated in Section 211.
19. Authorize a total of \$86,500,000 for the advance planning authorized in Section 213.
20. Authorize VA to carry out major construction projects in connection with the Capitol Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) initiative no sooner than 45 days or 30 days of continuous session of Congress following the submission of a one-time report to Congress by February 1, 2004, that lists each proposed major construction project in order of priority, with such priority established in Section 221(2).
21. Require VA to notify Congress in writing of actions proposed under the CARES initiative that would result in medical facility closures, significant staff realignments or medical facility consolidations and prohibit such actions from occurring until 60 days following the notification or 30 days of continuous session of Congress.
22. Express the sense of Congress of the difficulties that veterans residing in rural areas encounter in gaining access to VA health care facilities and require VA to report actions to be taken to improve rural access to care.
23. Require VA to develop a plan for meeting the future inpatient hospital care needs of veterans who reside in southern New Jersey.
24. Require VA to develop a plan for meeting the future hospital care needs of veterans who reside in southern Texas.
25. Require VA to develop a plan for meeting the future hospital care needs of veterans who reside in north central Washington.
26. Require VA to develop a plan for meeting the future hospital care needs of veterans who reside in the Panhandle area of Florida.
27. Require VA to submit a report on each plan developed under Section 231(a) to the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs by April 15, 2004.
28. Require VA to conduct a feasibility study in coordination with the Medical University of South Carolina and in consultation with DOD to consider establishing a joint health-care venture to

deliver inpatient, outpatient and/or long-term care to veterans, DOD, and other beneficiaries who reside in Charleston, South Carolina, with a report to the Committees by April 15, 2004.

29. Authorize VA to name the VA Medical Center in Prescott, Arizona, the Bob Stump Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.
30. Authorize VA to name the VA Medical Center (West Side Division) in Chicago, Illinois, the Jesse Brown Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.
31. Authorize VA to name the VA Medical Center in Houston Texas, the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.
32. Authorize VA to name the VA Medical Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.
33. Authorize VA to name the outpatient clinic in New London, Connecticut, the John J. McGuirk Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic.
34. Authorize VA to name the outpatient clinic in Horsham, Pennsylvania, the Victor J. Saracini Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic.

TITLE III—PERSONNEL MATTERS

1. Modify the authorities on appointment and promotion of certain personnel in the Veterans Health Administration.
2. Authorize VA to appoint chiropractors as clinical practitioners in the Veterans Health Administration under title 38, United States Code, and set various conditions and requirements associated with these appointments.
3. Authorize premium pay for Saturday duty to additional Veterans Health Administration health care workers with direct patient-care responsibilities.
4. Allow employees of the Veterans' Canteen Service to be considered for appointment in VA positions in the competitive service in the same manner as VA employees in the competitive service are considered for transfer to a Canteen Service position.

TITLE IV—OTHER MATTERS

1. Establish within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) an Office of Research Oversight to monitor, review and investigate matters of medical research compliance and assurance in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), including matters relating to the protection and safety of human subjects and VA employees participating in VA medical research programs. Require various reports to the Congress concerned with this new office.
2. Cover employees of Nonprofit Research Corporations under the Federal Tort Claims Act.
3. Extend authority to establish Nonprofit Research Corporations through December 31, 2008.
4. Authorize DOD to purchase medical equipment, services and supplies through VA's revolving supply fund, and require DOD to reimburse VA's supply revolving fund for any DOD purchases using DOD appropriations.
5. Extend VA's authority to provide certain housing assistance for homeless veterans through December 31, 2008.
6. Change the reporting date requirements on several reports VA is required to make to Congress.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Date of enactment except the following sections:

Sec. 301: Shall take effect 180 days after date of enactment.

Sec. 303: Shall apply with respect to the first pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2004.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

May 23, 2003: Referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

July 29, 2003: Hearing. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Sep. 30, 2003: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs ordered reported favorably with an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

Nov. 10, 2003: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and an amendment to the title, with written report number 108-193.

Nov. 19, 2003: Passed the Senate by unanimous consent.