

Providing Veterans Access to Care Without Writing VA a Blank Check

The following proposal, put forth by Chairman Jeff Miller, is essentially the Senate-passed VA reform bill with authorization for more medical facility leases and a more responsible funding stream overall that both provides an immediate \$10 billion for VA AND critical oversight of future needs.

Immediate Access to Care

Veterans Choice Card: This proposal would establish a two-year program to provide veterans a choice card that would give them the option to address immediate access needs by obtaining health care from certain non-VA providers. Veterans unable to receive care at a VA medical facility within VA's wait-time performance goals or those residing more than 40 miles from a VA facility would be eligible for this program.

Critical Review of VA's Problems

Independent VA Assessments: The proposal would require an independent assessment of Veterans Health Administration performance, to include recommendations for improvement of VA's current and projected health care capabilities and resources. The proposal would also require a similar review of VA's technology infrastructure. Additionally, commissions would be established to review construction operations and to strategically examine VA's health care delivery.

Addressing VA's Capacity to Address Veterans' Needs

VA Staffing: This proposal would provide VA with funds to hire additional doctors and nurses, per the Senate-passed bill.

Authorization of Major Medical Facility Leases: This proposal would authorize VA to enter into 27 major medical facility leases (per [HR 3521](#)) in 18 states and Puerto Rico.

Removal of Incompetent or Corrupt Senior Officials

Authority for Immediate Removal: This proposal would provide the VA Secretary authority to immediately remove incompetent senior executives based on poor job performance while guarding against the politicization of VA or other inappropriate uses of the authority, such as whistleblower retaliation.

Provisions to Support Veterans and their Families

Care for Victims of Sexual Assault: This proposal contains important provisions that would improve the delivery of care to veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military.

Survivor Benefits: This proposal would expand the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship program to include surviving spouses of members of the Armed Forces who die in the line of duty, so they can further their education, rebuild their lives and take care of their families.

In-State Tuition Assistance for Post-9/11 Veterans: This proposal includes a bi-partisan provision introduced by the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, similar to a provision that passed the House unanimously, that would make our transitioning service members eligible to receive the in-state tuition rate at the state-run higher-education institution of their choice, regardless of their state of residence.

Paying for This Proposal

No Blank Checks: The Senate-passed bill allowed the VA to spend "such sums" to accommodate the new spending – a blank check to the administration that would essentially provide unlimited funds.

The Senate Democrats are now demanding that we provide additional funding beyond the scope of the two bills that were conferenced in order to accommodate a new request for \$13.3 billion in spending from VA – an agency that even White House officials admit as having a "corrosive culture" and whose numbers are not to be trusted.

This proposal provides \$10 billion in immediate, emergency funding to get veterans speedy access to high quality, non-VA care, plus \$102 million to address the department's internal funding shortfalls for fiscal year 2014. Future department funding needs would be subject to the regular order, oversight and appropriations process – something demonstrably necessary for an organization such as VA, which has a long and well documented history of wasteful spending. The proposal also requires the VA Secretary to send an official two-year request with justification as part of the President's budget.