



AMVETS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

MAY 18, 2020

News Driving the Week

- A new massive [\\$3 trillion coronavirus stimulus package](#) includes aid for veterans who lost their health insurance, homeless veterans, native veterans and Department of Veterans Affairs employees. The nearly 2,000-page Heroes Act introduced by House Democrats Tuesday includes another \$3 trillion in funding for pandemic aid. Buried in those thousands of pages is a section dedicated to veterans and service members. Chief among the aid headed to veterans, the bill authorizes VA to provide health care for all veterans who lost their employer-sponsored health insurance because of the pandemic. Estimates for the cost of the different measures in the bill, which totals \$3 trillion and includes broad federal aid proposals, were not immediately clear. The massive funding package still faces an uphill climb in Congress before passage and must have support from the House and the Republican-controlled Senate to have a hope of passing into law.

- U.S Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Martha McSally sent a letter urging the Defense Department to expand telehealth coverage under TRICARE, the military health system's healthcare program, overseen by the Defense Health Agency. A few days later, US Senators Kelly Loeffler and Kyrsten Sinema introduced a bill aimed at expanding the ranks of care providers licensed by the Department of Veterans Affairs to use telehealth. The bill, called the [VA Mission Telehealth Clarification Act](#), expands on the landmark VA Mission Act, signed into law in June 2018, which greatly expanded the VA's telemedicine and mHealth network by, among other things, giving VA care providers the authority to treat veterans in any location. A companion bill was filed in the House in June 2019 by US Rep. Earl "Buddy" Carter, who noted the original act allowed only doctors to deliver care.

- Tricare, the military's health insurance provider, is covering telephone appointments and has [eliminated copayments for telehealth services](#). The changes will remain in effect through the national emergency, according to a new rule posted on the Federal Register by Jonathan Woodson, assistant

secretary of defense for health affairs.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs wants to create a marketplace of products that may support the [prevention of veteran suicides](#). VA said it plans to conduct a global competition, named the Suicide Prevention Grand Challenge, for the development of a marketplace that would feature evidence-based suicide prevention tools. The department seeks industry input to strategize on the future contract's solicitation. Interested parties may submit responses through May 21.

AMVETS in the News

[Collins, Duckworth, Tester Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Reduce Veterans' Health Care Costs & Protect Access to Health Care During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

U.S. Senators Susan Collins, Tammy Duckworth, and Jon Tester introduced bipartisan legislation to reduce health care costs and ensure parity for veterans impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act would ensure that veterans who receive health care from the Veterans Health Administration are not liable for out-of-pocket costs for qualifying COVID-19 preventive services, including an eventual COVID-19 vaccine. The No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act is endorsed by American Veterans (AMVETS) and the Service Women's Action Network (SWAN).

Upcoming Events

AMVETS Rolling to Remember Challenge

Sunday, May 24

Details [here](#)

House Appropriations Committee

Mil-Con/VA Subcommittee

Department of Veterans Affairs - Response to COVID-19

Date TBD

2359 Rayburn

House Veterans Affairs Committee

DAMA Subcommittee

Virtual Forum

Wednesday, May 27 2:00 PM

Promoting Veteran Mental Health with VA, Boulder Crest Institute, and Cohen Veterans Network

Thursday, May 28 2:00 PM

JOIN Audio: 1-800-767-1750, access code 52655#

AMVETS Legislative Priorities

[H.R. 1715](#) Charitable Equity for Veterans Act of 2019 introduced by Rep. Ron Kind of WI and Rep. Brad Wenstrup of OH

[H.R. 1997](#) Veterans Posttraumatic Growth Act introduced by Rep. Tim Ryan of OH

[S. 1906](#) Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act introduced by Rep. John Boozman of AR

[S. 785](#) Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019 introduced by Sen. Jon Tester of MT

[H.R. 4154](#) Leave No Veteran Behind Act introduced by Rep. Susie Lee of NV and Rep. Steve Watkins of KS

[H.R. 3025](#) You Are Not Forgotten Act introduced by Rep. Mark Meadows of NC and Rep. Susie Lee of NV



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