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of Veterans Affairs

News Release

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VA Announces Veterans Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences ('CARE') Act

Replaces Current '30-day/40-mile' System With Patient/Provider-centric Decision-making

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has presented the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees with the administration's draft proposal of the Veterans Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences (CARE) Act, designed to improve Veterans' experiences with and access to health care, building on the best features of VA's existing community care programs and strengthening VA's ability to furnish care in its facilities.

In order to meet Veterans' needs quickly and in a way that is easy to understand, the bill aims to:

- Clarify and simplify eligibility requirements,
- Set the framework for VA to continue to build a high-performing network,
- Streamline clinical and administrative processes,
- Implement new care coordination support for Veterans, and
- Merge and modernize community care programs.

"We want Veterans to work with their VA physicians to make informed decisions that are best for their clinical needs, whether in the VA or in the community, and this bill does just that, while strengthening VA services at the same time," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin.

The bill would replace the current wait-time and distance eligibility criteria under the Choice Program ("30-day/40-mile") with criteria that:

- Place the Veteran and his or her physician at the center of the decision process on how and where to get the best care available,
- Ensure VA is improving medical facilities and staffing levels to meet Veterans' needs in areas where VA care is substandard, and
- Offer options for Veterans to use a network of walk-in clinics for minor illnesses and injuries.

The CARE Act also includes:

- Proposals for new workforce tools to assist in maintaining and strengthening VA's world-class medical staff,
- A number of business process enhancements to improve financial management of the Community Care program,
- Provisions that would strengthen VA's ability to partner with other federal agencies and streamline VA's real property management authorities.

More information about access to care at the VA can be found at <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/>.

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