



## FACT SHEET ON CAREGIVER ASSISTANCE

In July of 2009, Congressman Michaud's bill, the *Caregiver Assistance and Resource Enhancement Act* (H.R. 3155), passed the House of Representatives. The bill would establish a caregiver program to help family and non-family members who provide care for disabled, ill, or injured veterans. It was signed into law by President Obama on May 5, 2010 as part of the *Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act* (S.1963). Details on the bill's benefits for caregivers of veterans can be found below.

### Caregivers of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Veterans

- Caregivers are defined as family members (parent, spouse, child, step-family member, extended family member) or non-family members who live with the veteran.
- The caregiver and eligible OEF/OIF veteran must submit a joint application and once accepted, the caregiver receives the following support services:
  - Training and education;
  - Counseling and mental health services;
  - Respite care of no less than 30 days annually, including 24 hour in-home respite care;
  - Lodging and subsistence payments when accompanying the veteran on medical care visits;
  - Health care through the CHAMPVA program (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs); and
  - Monthly financial stipend as determined appropriate by the Secretary based on the amount and degree of personal care services provided, and no less than the monthly amount of a commercial home health care entity.

### Caregivers of Veterans of Any Era

Caregivers are defined in the same manner as that of the support program for caregiver of OEF/OIF veterans. However, there is *no residency requirement* for non-family members. Support services for caregivers of veterans of any era include the following:

- Training and education;
- Counseling and mental health services;
- Respite care including 24 hours in-home respite care;
- Information on the support services available to caregivers through other public, private, and non-profit agencies.

# **ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS: *Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act***

## **WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE**

The bill will expand and improve VA health care services for the 1.8 million women who have bravely served their country. It requires the VA to:

- Conduct a study of barriers to women veterans seeking health care,
- Educate and train mental health professionals caring for veterans with sexual trauma;
- Implement a reintegration and readjustment pilot program;
- Establish a child care pilot program for women receiving regular and intensive mental health care and intensive health care services, or who are in need of such services but do not seek care due to the lack of child care services;
- Provide up to seven days of post-delivery health care to a new born child of a women veteran.

## **RURAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS**

- Improves health care for veterans living in rural areas, including by expanding transportation for veterans to local VA hospitals and clinics through VA grants to local Veterans Service Organizations.

## **MENTAL HEALTH CARE**

- Provides access to counseling and other mental health centers to any member of the Armed Forces (including members of the National Guard and Reserves, who served during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom but who are no longer on active duty) and
- Requires the VA to conduct a veterans' suicide study.

## **OTHER HEALTH CARE ISSUES**

- Prohibits the VA from collecting copayments from veterans who are catastrophically disabled.
- Creates a pilot program, which would provide specified dental services to veterans, survivors, and dependents of veterans through a dental insurer.
- Requires the VA to provide hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for certain Vietnam-era veterans exposed to herbicide and Gulf-War era veterans who have insufficient medical evidence to establish a service-connected disability.
- Provides higher priority status for certain veterans who are Medal of Honor recipients.

## **HOMELESS VETERANS**

- Expands the organizations offering transitional housing and other support for homeless veterans that can receive grants or per diems from the VA, which is particularly important to veterans in rural areas.