

110<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
2<sup>D</sup> SESSION

# H. R. 6445

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 31, 2008

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## AN ACT

To amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from collecting certain copayments from veterans who are catastrophically disabled, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans’ Health Care  
3 Policy Enhancement Act of 2008”.

4 **SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON COLLECTION OF CERTAIN COPAY-**  
5 **MENTS FROM VETERANS WHO ARE CATA-**  
6 **STROPHICALLY DISABLED.**

7 (a) PROHIBITION ON COLLECTION OF COPAYMENTS  
8 AND OTHER FEES FOR HOSPITAL OR NURSING HOME  
9 CARE.—Section 1710 of title 38, United States Code, is  
10 amended—

11 (1) by redesignating subsection (h) as sub-  
12 section (i); and

13 (2) by inserting after subsection (g) the fol-  
14 lowing new subsection (h):

15 “(h) Notwithstanding any other provision of this sec-  
16 tion, a veteran who is catastrophically disabled shall not  
17 be required to make any payment otherwise required  
18 under subsection (f) or (g) for the receipt of hospital care  
19 or nursing home care under this section.”.

20 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (h) of section  
21 1710 of title 38, United States Code, as added by sub-  
22 section (a), shall apply with respect to hospital care or  
23 nursing home care provided after the date of the enact-  
24 ment of this Act.

1 **SEC. 3. EXPANSION OF AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VET-**  
2 **ERANS AFFAIRS TO PROVIDE COUNSELING**  
3 **FOR FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS RE-**  
4 **CEIVING NONSERVICE-CONNECTED TREAT-**  
5 **MENT.**

6 Section 1782(b) of title 38, United States Code, is  
7 amended by striking “if—” and all that follows and insert-  
8 ing a period.

9 **SEC. 4. COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ON PAIN MANAGEMENT.**

10 (a) **COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REQUIRED.**—Not later  
11 than October 1, 2008, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
12 shall develop and implement a comprehensive policy on the  
13 management of pain experienced by veterans enrolled for  
14 health care services provided by the Department of Vet-  
15 erans Affairs.

16 (b) **SCOPE OF POLICY.**—The policy required by sub-  
17 section (a) shall cover each of the following:

18 (1) The systemwide management of acute and  
19 chronic pain experienced by veterans.

20 (2) The standard of care for pain management  
21 to be used throughout the Department.

22 (3) The consistent application of pain assess-  
23 ments to be used throughout the Department.

24 (4) The assurance of prompt and appropriate  
25 pain care treatment and management by the Depart-  
26 ment, systemwide, when medically necessary.

1           (5) The Department’s program of research re-  
2           lated to acute and chronic pain suffered by veterans,  
3           including pain attributable to central and peripheral  
4           nervous system damage characteristic of injuries in-  
5           curred in modern warfare.

6           (6) The Department’s program of pain care  
7           education and training for health care personnel of  
8           the Department.

9           (7) The Department’s program of patient edu-  
10          cation for veterans suffering from acute or chronic  
11          pain and their families.

12          (c) UPDATES.—The Secretary shall revise the policy  
13          developed under subsection (a) on a periodic basis in ac-  
14          cordance with experience and evolving best practice guide-  
15          lines.

16          (d) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall develop the  
17          policy developed under subsection (a), and revise such pol-  
18          icy under subsection (c), in consultation with veterans  
19          service organizations and organizations with expertise in  
20          the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and management of  
21          pain.

22          (e) ANNUAL REPORT.—

23                (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days  
24                after the date of the completion and initial imple-  
25                mentation of the policy under subsection (a) and on

1       October 1 of every fiscal year thereafter through fis-  
2       cal year 2018, the Secretary shall submit to the  
3       Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and  
4       the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of  
5       Representatives a report on the implementation of  
6       the policy developed under subsection (a).

7               (2) CONTENTS.—The report required by para-  
8       graph (1) shall include the following:

9               (A) A description of the policy developed  
10       and implemented under subsection (a) and any  
11       revisions to such policy under subsection (c).

12              (B) A description of the performance  
13       measures used to determine the effectiveness of  
14       such policy in improving pain care for veterans  
15       systemwide.

16              (C) An assessment of the adequacy of the  
17       Department's pain management services based  
18       on a survey of patients managed in Department  
19       clinics.

20              (D) An assessment of the Department's re-  
21       search programs relevant to the treatment of  
22       the types of acute and chronic pain suffered by  
23       veterans.

24              (E) An assessment of the training provided  
25       to Department health care personnel with re-

1           spect to the diagnosis, treatment, and manage-  
2           ment of acute and chronic pain.

3           (F) An assessment of the Department’s  
4           pain care-related patient education programs.

5           (f) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION DEFINED.—

6 In this section, the term “veterans service organization”  
7 means any organization recognized by the Secretary for  
8 the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title  
9 38, United States Code.

10 **SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSOLIDATED PATIENT AC-**  
11 **COUNTING CENTERS.**

12           (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTERS.—Chapter 17 of  
13 title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after  
14 section 1729A the following:

15 **“§ 1729B. Consolidated patient accounting centers**

16           “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 5 years after the  
17 date of enactment of this section, the Secretary of Vet-  
18 erans Affairs shall establish not more than seven consoli-  
19 dated patient accounting centers for conducting industry-  
20 modeled regionalized billing and collection activities of the  
21 Department.

22           “(b) FUNCTIONS.—The centers shall carry out the  
23 following functions:

24           “(1) Reengineer and integrate all business proc-  
25 esses of the revenue cycle of the Department.



- 1 the item relating to such section in the table of contents
- 2 of such Act (102 Stat. 487) are repealed.

Passed the House of Representatives July 30, 2008.

Attest:                   LORRAINE C. MILLER,  
*Clerk.*