

Planning for Aging Veterans Act of 2021

Sponsored by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)

Background:

As the aging veteran population grows, the long-term care needs of veterans deserve our attention to ensure these veterans are receiving the care they have earned. Within the veteran population, groups with unique needs, such as women veterans, are growing. Additionally, long-term care services need to accommodate the changing needs of veterans, such as those with traumatic brain injury or memory loss. Nearly 50 percent of the 9 million veterans currently enrolled in VA's health care system are at least 65 years of age. From 2018 to 2028, the number of enrolled veterans aged 75 and older was projected to grow by 46 percent, and during the same time frame, the number of enrolled veterans under age 75 was projected to drop by 14 percent.

VA's Community Living Centers, community nursing homes, and State veterans homes all play a pivotal role in providing long-term care services to veterans. However, the level of support and oversight VA and other federal agencies provide differs across the different types of facilities. Many veterans would also benefit from home- and community-based services to support the desire to age in place.

Legislative Summary:

The Planning for Aging Veterans Act of 2021 would pave the way for future investments in long-term care, improve VA's relationship with State veterans homes, and expand the care veterans in State homes receive. This legislation would:

- ❖ Require VA to develop a strategy addressing the current and future long-term care needs of veterans to identify areas for future investment.
- ❖ Standardize the process across VA for medical centers entering into sharing agreements with State homes.
- ❖ Clarify VA policy to ensure catastrophically disabled veterans residing in a State home receive their medications without a copayment, as they would if they resided elsewhere.
- ❖ Require that any deficiencies during State home inspections are reported to the VA and inspection reports are published on the VA website.
- ❖ Create a pilot program which will provide geriatric psychiatry assistance to eligible veterans at State homes.
- ❖ Instruct VA to work with public housing authorities and local organizations to assist aging homeless veterans in accessing existing housing and supportive services.