



How health reform affects VETERANS & TRICARE

Preserves VA Health Care

- Health care reform **will not impact VA health care**. Veterans eligible for VA health care will remain eligible under health reform; nothing in the proposed legislation will affect veterans' access to the care that they currently receive. In fact, the legislation makes clear that the Department of Veterans' Affairs will retain full authority over the VA health care system.

Preserves TRICARE and TRICARE for Life Benefits

- Health reform **will not affect TRICARE or TRICARE for Life**. There is no provision in the legislation that would lead to increases in co-pays, changes in eligibility requirements, or in any way modify how TRICARE is administered. The Department of Defense would maintain sole authority to operate TRICARE.

Meets the Shared Responsibility Requirement

- Those covered by VA health care, TRICARE, or TRICARE for Life meet the individual responsibility requirement, and are therefore exempt from any penalty.
- To provide additional reassurance and to ensure there is no misunderstanding, the Senate and House of Representatives passed the TRICARE Affirmation Act (H.R. 4887). See below for details.

Offers Greater Flexibility and Choice to Veterans

- Includes provisions to ensure that veterans are provided additional choices for high-quality and affordable care. Allows veterans receiving VA health care to also enroll in an insurance plan through the bill's health insurance Exchanges.
- Ensures increased health insurance options as well as expanded consumer protections to prevent insurance companies from denying or setting limits on coverage, but will not require anyone to change their health insurance coverage.

Expands Coverage and Improves Care for Veterans

- Recent expert studies have reported an alarming number of veterans who are living without health care. Harvard researchers found that nearly 1.5 million veterans lacked health care coverage last year, with thousands suffering and dying prematurely because of reduced access to care. With ac-

Statement from Secretary Gates on the impact of health care legislation on TRICARE:

As Secretary of Defense, the health and well-being of America's men and women in uniform is my highest priority. Our troops and their families can be re-assured that the health care reform legislation being passed by the Congress will not negatively impact the TRICARE medical insurance program, as it already meets the bill's quality and minimum benefit standards. This was clarified by a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives yesterday and is expected to be re-affirmed by the Senate. The President and I are committed to seeing that our troops, retirees and their families will continue to receive the best quality health care.

cess to coverage through health insurance Exchanges and premium tax credits and cost sharing reductions, health care reform will help these veterans gain access to much-needed, affordable care.

Senator Warner is an Original Co-Sponsor of the TRICARE Affirmation Act (H.R. 4887) & the TRICARE Dependent Coverage Extension Act (S. 3201)

- The TRICARE Affirmation Act would simply clarify, and write into law, that TRICARE beneficiaries already meet the minimum requirements for individual health insurance and will not be required to purchase additional coverage under health care reform.
- The TRICARE Dependent Coverage Extension Act would ensure that dependent children of our armed service members and retirees are also able to stay on their family's health insurance until age 26.