

Veterans Organizations Issue Update Report on VA MISSION Act Implementation

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Washington, D.C. — Today, *The Independent Budget (IB)* co-authors — the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars), DAV (Disabled American Veterans), and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) — have issued [“*The Independent Budget Veterans Agenda for the 116th Congress: Critical Issue Update.*”](#) This follow-up to the group’s [2019 report](#) evaluates progress on 26 key recommendations concerning access to veterans health care, benefits and transitional services, to help ensure the VA MISSION Act will be wholly and effectively implemented.

Since the majority of the reforms contained in the VA MISSION Act have only been in effect since last June, and others have not yet been implemented, it is still far too soon to judge whether the law will achieve its intended purposes to improve veterans’ access to high-quality medical care. Overall, the transition of VA’s community care program from the Veterans Choice Program (VCP) to the VA MISSION Act’s Community Care Network (CCN) was significantly better than the transition to the original VCP. However, of the 26 recommendations *The IB* co-authors made in the 2019 report, only one has been fulfilled, 11 have not been fulfilled and 14 are considered “to be determined,” which indicates partial or no fulfillment, with aspects that cannot be fully evaluated at this time. For each recommendation, *The IB* co-authors explain the status rating, and in many cases, supplemental recommendations about how the VA and/or Congress can help to achieve the goal.

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Among those recommendations that *The IB* rates as not fulfilled are: conducting an open, transparent process for developing market area assessments and strategic plans that actively engages veteran service organization and veteran stakeholders; the equal application of quality and competency standards across both VA and non-VA providers to ensure the highest level of care possible for veterans; and the creation of a tiered integrated network that places VA providers first, and DOD, federal partners and academic affiliates second when VA care is not accessible.

“This report is far from a final evaluation of the VA MISSION Act, especially as it has been less than a year since the law went into effect,” said *The IB* co-authors. “However, we believe it is imperative to establish these benchmarks early on to hold the VA and Congress accountable for the full and faithful implementation of the law, and ultimately, the reform of the veterans’ health care system. America’s veterans have earned and deserve nothing less, and we look forward to working in collaboration with leaders in the VA and Congress to bring the vision of the VA MISSION Act to fruition.”

For more than 30 years, The Independent Budget veterans service organizations (IBVSOs)—DAV (Disabled American Veterans), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW)—have worked to develop and present concrete recommendations to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs remains fully-funded and capable of carrying out its mission to serve veterans and their families both now and in the future. Throughout the year, the IBVSOs work together to promote their shared recommendation, while each organization also works independently to identify and address legislative and policy issues that affect the organizations’ members and the broader veterans’ community.

To view *The IB*’s full budget and policy recommendations, please visit independentbudget.org.

About DAV:

DAV empowers veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. It is dedicated to a single purpose: fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served. DAV does this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America’s injured heroes on Capitol Hill; providing employment resources to veterans and their families and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life. DAV, a non-profit organization with more than 1 million members, was founded in 1920 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1932. Learn more at www.dav.org.

About the VFW:

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally-chartered VFW is comprised entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. With 1.6 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in more than 6,200 Posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim "NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS" than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans' service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at www.VFW.org.

About Paralyzed Veterans of America:

Paralyzed Veterans of America is the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely to the benefit and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or disease. For more than 70 years, the organization has ensured that veterans receive the benefits earned through service to our nation; monitored their care in VA spinal cord injury units; and funded research and education in the search for a cure and improved care for individuals with paralysis. With more than 70 offices and 33 chapters, Paralyzed Veterans of America serves veterans, their families and their caregivers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Learn more at www.pva.org.