

Elderly Veterans Care Bill Introduced in House

A bill introduced in the House in February is named for a longtime veterans advocate, and if passed and signed, the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act would give more support to the caregivers of veterans

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A VFW-approved House bill that aims to improve service for aging veterans was introduced in February.

The Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act (H.R. 542) would give additional support to caregivers and expand access to home and community-based care programs for older veterans.

If passed and signed into law, the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act would require VA to:

- Expand access to a non-VA provider that would furnish all-inclusive care to elderly veterans living in the community.
- Update electronic capabilities to assist veterans and caregivers using long-term health care and support services.
- Start a pilot program that would address homemaker and health aide services to veterans.
- Give reports and conduct studies on programs that provide medical and health services to elderly veterans in their homes and communities.

In a March testimony before the House VA Health Subcommittee, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Meggan Thomas said that the approval of the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act, legislation that VFW has long advocated for, would expand many services for veterans' caregivers. She also said caregivers "relieve VA of the necessity" to place veterans in homes with long-term care.

"Even though veterans may require assistance with daily activities, being at home offers

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independence and familiarity, which is essential for veterans in the beginning stages of dementia,” Thomas said. “This freedom to remain in their homes needs to be supported by VA services and funding, while not financially stressing veterans and their families.”

According to a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate in March, the implementation of the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act would cost about \$120 million to implement and increase VA spending by \$82 million over the next 10 years.

The CBO also reported that estimating the number of veterans who would enroll in an elderly care program is a “significant uncertainty.”

The bill is named after former Sen. Elizabeth Dole, widow of the late former Senate majority leader and VFW member Bob Dole. Elizabeth Dole has been a long-time advocate for veterans and their caregivers.

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