

National Healthcare Law Now Complete

PROGRAMS PROVIDED TO 8 MILLION VA BENEFICIARIES NOW RECOGNIZED

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WASHINGTON — The national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is thanking President Obama for signing H.R. 5014 into law last Thursday to recognize all Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare programs as meeting minimum essential coverage standards under the new national healthcare law.

"I want to thank the president for his signature to protect the integrity of all VA healthcare programs, as well as the entire Congress for their unanimous support of this much needed legislation," said VFW National Commander Thomas J. Tradewell Sr., of Sussex, Wis.

"I especially want to recognize House Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton (D-Mo.) and ranking member Buck McKeon (R-Calif.), Senate VA Committee Chairman Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii) and ranking member Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee Chairman Jim Webb (D-Va.), and House VA Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-Calif.) and ranking member Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) for championing these protections," he said.

Skelton announced just days before a full House vote on S. 3162, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, that only a portion of the Defense Department's Tricare healthcare program was recognized as meeting minimum essential coverage standards. His discovery resulted in a closer review of the 2,400-page document, which revealed that not all VA healthcare programs were recognized either, to include those provided to widows and dependent children.

"We know that national healthcare will help many veterans who do not qualify for DOD or VA care," said Tradewell, "but missing from the original legislation was language that would clearly recognize and protect the hard earned healthcare programs of those who do. The new law had to be fixed, not for what it provided, but for what it omitted."

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The VFW national commander is quick to praise congressional leadership for their understanding of the problem and for their legislative support to ensure that all the healthcare programs provided by the nation's two largest federal departments were recognized under the new national healthcare law.

"The president signed H.R. 4887 into law April 26 to protect the healthcare programs provided to more than 9 million military families, retirees and nonappropriated fund employees. Getting H.R. 5014 signed into law now completes the circle for more than 8 million VA beneficiaries," said Tradewell.

"The VFW is proud to have taken the lead on this issue on behalf of all of America's veterans, servicemembers and their families. It's a prime example of what we do as advocates here in the Nation's Capitol."