

# Senators Introduce Legislation to Make Preventive Health Care More Affordable for Vets

**'The VFW urges Congress to pass S. 1161 ... and remove unnecessary barriers to health care for our nation's veterans'**

May 18, 2017

**WASHINGTON** – Today, combat veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), U.S. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) introduced bipartisan legislation to make health care more affordable for America's veterans. Their Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act would stop forcing our nation's veterans to pay out-of-pocket costs for essential preventive health medications and prescription drugs and add preventive medications and services to the list of no-fee treatments that VA covers. Under current law, veterans are forced to pay co-pays for preventive health care services that military retirees and civilians with private insurance plans receive for free.

“All Americans deserve access to the best health care possible — especially the veterans who risked life and limb to defend our nation and made significant sacrifices on our behalf,” said Duckworth. “This common-sense bipartisan legislation will ensure we're no longer asking veterans to pay more for essential health services than every other insured American, while saving taxpayer dollars in the process. I'm proud to join Senators Collins and Blumenthal in introducing our Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act today.”

“We owe it to our veterans to provide them with the high-quality health care they have earned through their service to our country,” said Collins. “By removing the copayment requirement for preventive health care, our legislation would protect patients from experiencing serious illnesses that are costly to treat and promote the health and well-being of our veterans.”

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“This bill will ensure our veterans receive quality, affordable, preventive healthcare instead of facing deadly or debilitating illness that could have been detected,” said Blumenthal. “Preventive health care is the key to a long, healthy life, and those who have selflessly served our country deserve nothing less.”

“Veterans who rely on VA for their health care needs and the uninsured are the only Americans forced to pay for preventive medications,” added VFW Adjutant General Robert E. Wallace. “There is no excusable reason why every other American can receive breast cancer prevention medicine cost-free, but veterans must pay. It is unsatisfactory that every other American prone to falls and breaking bones can receive cost-free Vitamin D supplements, but our warriors with TBI must pay. The VFW thanks Senators Duckworth, Collins and Blumenthal for introducing legislation to end this inequity. The VFW urges Congress to pass S. 1161, Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act, and remove unnecessary barriers to health care for our nation’s veterans.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 7 of 10 deaths in this country are caused by chronic illnesses like cardiovascular disease and breast cancer that nearly half of all adults suffer from, and many of those illnesses are preventable with early and effective treatment. Catching these potentially fatal illnesses early may avoid costly and complex treatments down the line and, more importantly, increases patient survival odds. That’s one reason current law requires every insurer except the VA to cover important preventive services and medications at no additional cost to insured individuals.

The bipartisan Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act would provide veterans preventive medication and services cost-free, the same benefit that all other insured Americans receive, and enhance continuity of care for service members transitioning from military health care coverage. This will ensure the health benefits provided to military personnel, veterans, military retirees and civilians are subject to consistent copay standards for preventative health services. The legislation is endorsed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), the American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and American Veterans (AMVETS).

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