



H.R. 6207; the ACT to Improve VA Timing and Efficiency (ACTIVATE)

Legislative Summary

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is responsible for providing quality and timely care for our nation's veterans. In recent years, the VA has failed to live up to this responsibility and has jeopardized the health of our veterans. VA medical centers across the country are experiencing a backlog of cases which has resulted in veterans waiting months, and sometimes years, for the care they need. In too many instances, this backlog has resulted in the death of veterans who were unable to see healthcare providers and receive critical, lifesaving care.

H.R. 6207, *ACTIVATE*, allows the Department of Veterans Affairs to use scheduling resources available outside the VA to assist veterans in scheduling their medical appointments in a timely manner. This will ensure the VA can provide the quality and efficient care our veterans deserve.

Facts

- In April 2016, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a study showing that out of 180 randomly selected veterans seeking healthcare at six VA health centers the average wait time was 22 to 71 days. Additionally, 60 out of the 180 veterans studied had not received medical care by the time the study ended
- The GAO study found that the Veterans Health Administration's oversight of veterans' access to primary care is hindered by data weakness and the lack of a comprehensive scheduling policy
- The VA Office of Inspector General (VA OIG), found in a February 2016 report titled "Review of Alleged Untimely Care at the Community Based Outpatient Clinic Colorado Springs, CO" that sixty four percent of all veterans did not receive timely care
- In a Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on February 25, 2016, VA Deputy Inspector General Halliday stated that the VA needs a new scheduling system and added "scheduling practices across the VA need to be tightened up"

Key Provisions

- H.R. 6207 directs the Secretary of the VA to seek private entities to assist with the scheduling and managing of appointments for hospital care and medical services for veterans enrolled in the patient enrollment system
- The bill allows the VA to seek outside help from professional medical schedulers and operators to assist veterans in making appointment and follow-up visits at VA medical facilities
- These professional medical schedulers and operators would be allowed to manage all aspects of care ranging from initial appointments, to home health care visits and follow-up appointments, including lab work and tests

