

S 2170 - Veterans E-Health and Telemedicine Support Act of 2015 or The VETS Act of 2015

S 2017: Ernst (R-IA), Hirono (D-HI), Cornyn (R-TX), Udall (D-NM), Tillis (D-NM), Sessions (R-AL), Boozman (R-AR), Rounds (R-SD), Ayotte (R-NH), Grassley (R-IA) and Heinrich (D-NM)

Author Intent: To improve the ability of health care professionals to treat veterans through the use of telemedicine.

BILL LANGUAGE

CURRENT LAW

A covered health care professional may provide services at any location in any state, regardless of where the health care professional or the patient is located if telemedicine is being used. Such treatment may be provided outside of a facility owned by the federal government.

State licensure requirements are waived for VA doctors if patient and provider are located at a federal facility.

A report will be submitted by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the effectiveness of the use of telemedicine by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

N/A

Impact and Analysis

This bill would allow Veteran Affairs (VA) providers to provide services to VA beneficiaries located in another state and who are not in a federal facility if telemedicine is used. While current law allows a VA provider to practice across state lines, both provider and patient must be located in a federal facility. The VETS Act of 2015 would allow services to be provided to patients in their homes and in other health facilities in their communities that are not federally owned if telemedicine is used. The Act would also apply to private health care professionals who have a contract with the VA to provide such services. All requirements under the Controlled Substances Act would still remain.

Additionally, The VETS Act would require a report from the Secretary of the VA on the effectiveness of telemedicine. Assessment elements shall include:

- Patient Satisfaction
- Provider Satisfaction
- The effect on access of care with the use of telemedicine
- The frequency of the use of telemedicine
- Productivity of health care providers
- Wait times for an appointment
- Reduction in use of services
- Types of appointments for telemedicine
- The number of appointments for telemedicine requested
- Cost savings

The bill would help increase access to services for veterans in a variety of specialties and may provide for a more even distribution of available professionals across the country. The bill will only cover the states. US territories are not included. The bill has similar features as HR 2516 which was introduced earlier in the year. However, HR 2516 did apply to geographical areas beyond the states such as territories.