

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 663

To establish the position of Choice Program Ombudsman within the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs to manage complaints regarding the provision of hospital care and medical services under section 101 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 15, 2017

Mr. THUNE introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To establish the position of Choice Program Ombudsman within the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs to manage complaints regarding the provision of hospital care and medical services under section 101 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Choice Pro-
5 gram Resolution Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF POSITION OF CHOICE PRO-**
2 **GRAM OMBUDSMAN.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Veterans Access, Choice, and
4 Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38
5 U.S.C. 1701 note) is amended by inserting after section
6 101 the following new section:

7 **“SEC. 101A. CHOICE PROGRAM OMBUDSMAN.**

8 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Inspector General of the
9 Department of Veterans Affairs shall select, from among
10 employees of the Office of Inspector General of the De-
11 partment of Veterans Affairs, a Choice Program Ombuds-
12 man to manage complaints regarding the provision of hos-
13 pital care and medical services under section 101.

14 “(b) DUTIES.—The Choice Program Ombudsman
15 shall do the following:

16 “(1) Serve as a central collection point to re-
17 ceive complaints from veterans, individuals acting on
18 behalf of veterans (including family members and
19 caregivers), employees of the Department of Vet-
20 erans Affairs, and non-Department health care pro-
21 viders with respect to the following:

22 “(A) Problems with scheduling veterans to
23 obtain hospital care or medical services under
24 section 101.

25 “(B) Problems with authorizing such care
26 or services under such section.

1 “(C) With respect to non-Department
2 health care providers, problems with enrolling
3 with the Department to provide such care or
4 services under such section.

5 “(D) Problems with copayments and reim-
6 bursements under such section.

7 “(E) Problems with coordinating such care
8 or services between the Department and non-
9 Department health care providers.

10 “(2) Establish a methodology to resolve com-
11 plaints described in paragraph (1).

12 “(3) Submit to the Committee on Veterans’ Af-
13 fairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’
14 Affairs of the House of Representatives a quarterly
15 report on activities conducted under this section, in-
16 cluding the following information:

17 “(A) The total number of complaints re-
18 ceived under this section.

19 “(B) The total number of such complaints
20 that have been resolved and the total number of
21 such complaints that are pending.

22 “(C) With respect to every other report
23 submitted under this paragraph, beginning with
24 the first such report, the findings or rec-
25 ommendations of the Choice Program Ombuds-

1 man for resolving systemic problems with the
2 provision of hospital care and medical services
3 under section 101, including recommendations
4 to improve the implementation of such section
5 in rural and highly rural areas and for veterans
6 who are members of Indian tribes.

7 “(c) COMPLAINT SUBMISSION PROCESS.—The Sec-
8 retary of Veterans Affairs shall publish on a publicly avail-
9 able Internet website of the Department, and a publicly
10 available Internet website of the Office of Inspector Gen-
11 eral of the Department, information regarding the process
12 for submitting a complaint to the Choice Program Om-
13 budsman under this section.

14 “(d) SUNSET.—This section shall terminate on the
15 earlier of—

16 “(1) the termination date specified in section
17 101(p); or

18 “(2) the date that is 10 years after the date of
19 the enactment of the Veterans Choice Program Res-
20 olution Act.

21 “(e) INDIAN TRIBE DEFINED.—In this section, the
22 term ‘Indian tribe’ has the meaning given that term in
23 section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education
24 Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b).”.

1 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents
2 at the beginning of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Ac-
3 countability Act of 2014 is amended by inserting after the
4 item relating to section 101 the following new item:

“Sec. 101A. Choice Program Ombudsman.”.

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