

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1146

To establish a pilot program under which veterans in the State of Alaska may receive health care benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs at non-Department medical facilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 6, 2011

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

A BILL

To establish a pilot program under which veterans in the State of Alaska may receive health care benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs at non-Department medical facilities, and for other purposes.

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 “Alaska Hero’s Card
5 Act of 2011”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM ON PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE**
2 **TO VETERANS RESIDING IN ALASKA AT NON-**
3 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MED-**
4 **ICAL FACILITIES.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
6 shall establish a pilot program to assess the feasibility and
7 advisability of carrying out a program by which a covered
8 veteran can, except as provided in subsection (f), receive
9 necessary hospital care or medical services for any condi-
10 tion at any hospital or medical facility or from any medical
11 provider eligible to receive payments under—

12 (1) the Medicare program under title XVIII of
13 the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.);

14 (2) the Medicaid program under title XIX of
15 such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.);

16 (3) the TRICARE program; or

17 (4) the Indian health program.

18 (b) COVERED VETERAN.—For purposes of this sec-
19 tion, a covered veteran is any veteran who—

20 (1) is entitled to hospital care or medical serv-
21 ices under laws administered by the Secretary of
22 Veterans Affairs;

23 (2) is located in the State of Alaska; and

24 (3) resides at a location that is located in—

25 (A) such State; and

1 (B) a town, village, or other community
2 that is not accessible by motor vehicle (as de-
3 fined in section 30102 of title 49, United States
4 Code).

5 (c) DURATION OF PILOT.—The pilot program shall
6 be carried out during the two-year period beginning on
7 the date of the enactment of this Act.

8 (d) COST OF CARE AND SERVICE.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The cost of any hospital
10 care or medical service provided under the pilot pro-
11 gram shall be borne by the United States from
12 amounts other than amounts appropriated or other-
13 wise made available for an Indian health program.

14 (2) NO BILLING OF VETERANS.—The Secretary
15 shall take measures to ensure that covered veterans
16 are not billed for the hospital care and medical serv-
17 ices they receive under the pilot program.

18 (e) ALASKA HERO CARD.—In carrying out the pilot
19 program, the Secretary shall issue to each covered veteran
20 a card to be known as a “Alaska Hero Card” that such
21 veteran may present to an authorized provider to establish
22 the covered veteran’s eligibility for hospital care and med-
23 ical services under the pilot program.

24 (f) AUTHORIZED PROVIDERS.—The Secretary may
25 establish a list of authorized providers from whom a cov-

1 ered veteran may receive hospital care and medical serv-
2 ices under the pilot program.

3 (g) MEASURES TO ENSURE QUALITY AND SAFETY
4 OF CARE.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall take
6 such measures as may be necessary to ensure that
7 the quality and safety of care provided to veterans
8 under the pilot program is equal to or better than
9 the quality and safety of care otherwise provided by
10 the Department of Veterans Affairs.

11 (2) SPECIFIC MEASURES.—The measures de-
12 scribed in paragraph (1) may include requirements
13 relating to the following:

14 (A) Credentialing and accreditation of pro-
15 viders of hospital care or medical services.

16 (B) Timely reporting of access to care.

17 (C) Timely reporting of clinical informa-
18 tion to the Secretary.

19 (D) Reporting safety issues, patient com-
20 plaints, and patient satisfaction.

21 (E) Robust quality programs, including
22 peer review and compliance with industry
23 standards and requirements.

24 (3) PROVIDERS CERTIFIED BY INDIAN HEALTH
25 SERVICE.—For purposes of the pilot program, the

1 Secretary shall consider the equality and safety of
2 care provided by a provider described in subsection
3 (a)(2) who is certified by the Indian Health Service
4 as a community health aide pursuant to section 119
5 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (25
6 U.S.C. 1616*l*) and who is providing services within
7 the scope of such certification as being equal to or
8 better than the quality and safety of care otherwise
9 provided by the Department.

10 (h) SAVINGS.—Nothing in this section shall be con-
11 strued to limit any right of recovery available to an Indian
12 health program under the provisions of section 206 or
13 405(c) of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (25
14 U.S.C. 1621e and 1645(c)), or any other Federal or State
15 law.

16 (i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

17 (1) HOSPITAL CARE AND MEDICAL SERVICES.—
18 The terms “hospital care” and “medical services”
19 have the meanings given such terms in section 1701
20 of title 38, United States Code.

21 (2) INDIAN HEALTH PROGRAM.—The term “In-
22 dian health program” has the meaning given such
23 term in section 4 of the Indian Health Care Im-
24 provement Act (25 U.S.C. 1603).

1 (3) SERVICE-CONNECTED.—The term “service-
2 connected” has the meaning given such term in sec-
3 tion 101 of such title.

4 (4) TRICARE PROGRAM.—The term
5 “TRICARE program” has the meaning given such
6 term in section 1072 of title 10, United States Code.

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