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CSHJR 10 (MVA)
Sponsor Statement

CSHJR 10 (MVA) urges the United States Congress to provide the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with the funding and resources necessary to enable the Veterans Health Administration to provide sufficient, timely and predictable health care for all veterans.

The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform, an association of national veterans groups, has found that the current funding mechanism for veterans' health care is "unreliable" and subject to "great political wrangling." Without a streamlined, comprehensive and accessible health care system, many veterans are denied the health care they are entitled to.

As the number of veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq suffering from traumatic brain injury, post traumatic stress syndrome and other combat-related injuries is increasing, the need for access to quality health care, including mental health and substance abuse treatment, is increasing as well. Veterans returning from these wars are entitled to five years of health care from the VA without charge, regardless of the priority group to which they are assigned. However, they are only reimbursed for the cost of traveling to access that care if they meet certain eligibility criteria.

Many Alaskan veterans have access to outpatient care at a variety of urban facilities – including the Veterans Affairs Healthcare System facility in Anchorage, the Veterans Affairs Community-based Outpatient Clinics at Fort Wainwright and in Kenai, and the soon-to-open facilities in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Juneau, and Homer. There is also a system in place that allows Alaskan veterans living in outlying areas to access quality health care at local community health centers. However, there are still many veterans living in rural areas that are unable to access health care in their communities, resulting in costly travel to central locations to receive that care.

CSHJR 10 (MVA) supports efforts to ensure that veterans across Alaska have access to quality health care in the outlying areas where the VA does not have clinics, including at Community Health Centers, community mental health centers, substance abuse treatment centers, tribal health organizations, and other appropriate local providers. It also supports increased funding for research into traumatic brain injuries and encourages the Veterans Health Administration to improve its electronic claims process and ability to use information contained in military records in order to provide a more efficient health care delivery system.

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