

HJR

16

# HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)

Date Referred: January 25, 1989

FURTHER REFERRALS: FINANCE

Date of Committee Action: 4/13/89

The HEALTH, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES Committee recommends that:

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 16

[MEDICAL BENEFITS FOR VETERANS]

Relating to medical benefits for veterans.

[ ] be replaced with \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] the same title  
[ ] a new title

[ ] have attached amendment(s)

- [  ] do pass  
[ ] do not pass  
[ ] no recommendation  
[ ] individual recommendations  
[ ] additional referral to the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

ADOPTS: \_\_\_\_\_ letter of intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

- [ ] fiscal impact  
[  ] zero fiscal note  
[ ] zero with analysis

APPROVES PREVIOUS:

- [ ] fiscal note(s) published:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
[ ] zero fiscal notes(s), published:  
\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNING DO PASS:

SIGNING OTHER THAN DO PASS:  
(Do Not Pass, No Recommendation, Amend)

H. Ellis  
Mark Baker  
Cheri Davis  
M. F. Thompson  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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H. Ellis  
Chairman's signature



Official Business

# Alaska State Legislature

## House

P.O. BOX V  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Health, Education, and Social Services Committee

FROM: Rep. Richard Foster *RF*

DATE: April 13, 1989

RE: HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 16

Thank you for scheduling HJR 16. Either I or one of my staff will be available for the committee meeting. This problem was first brought to my attention by a constituent who had a heart transplant in Salt Lake City last year. Added information concerning proposed cuts in spending for veteran medical benefits was highlighted in the "Vet's Forum", Volume 3, Number 1, page 3, January/February 1989; Division of Veterans' Affairs, State of Alaska. See the attached copy of the referenced page.



"A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards. More than that no man is entitled to, and less than that no man shall have." ---Theodore Roosevelt

★ ★ ★ WHAT'S NEW & ON THE HORIZON FOR VETERANS ★ ★ ★

## VA Budget Plan Draws Congressional FIRE

(From the House Veterans Affairs Committee news Jan. 1989)

WASHINGTON -- The Reagan Administration presented Capitol Hill with a proposed spending plan for veterans' programs that would cut nearly 9,000 VA health care employees, reduce medical facility construction, and deny medical care to thousands of veterans.

"This is shocking. Whoever planned this budget certainly isn't paying close attention to the real world," remarked Rep. G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery (D-MS), Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. "It marks a continuation of OMB's [Office of Management and Budget] pattern of back door approaches to kill veterans' health care programs. They continue to cut employees and hold back resources and naturally, fewer veterans will receive care. Then they base their projections on this reduction, and so on, and so on. It's a cycle they've played to the hilt, and this Committee is fed up with it."

The Veterans Administration, in recent months, has begun to terminate health care programs, take hospital beds out of service (in addition to thousands already closed), and deny to certain groups of veterans, care at virtually every veterans' hospital in the country. House Veterans' Affairs Committee staff forecast, conservatively, a medical budget shortfall over the next two years of \$1.1 billion below the amount needed to deliver the level of services provided in FY '88. The Administration projects what Montgomery calls "unrealistic" declines in the number of veterans utilizing VA health care services. Funding cuts are calculated on these same projections. According to the Administration, (and their upside-down crystal ball,) there will be (FY 90 compared to FY 89): 17,516 fewer patients treated in VA hospitals; a 23.8% (6,269) decrease in the number of domiciliary patients; & a 23.7% (7,983) decrease in nursing home care patients.

"These numbers fly in the face of all facts and logic. Eligible veterans are literally standing in line for care that this budget seeks to deny them," said Montgomery. The Administration also proposed to cut the number of full-time medical and research employees by 8,957 -- from 199,852 to 190,895. The Administration requested medical facility construction funding that falls short of published VA recommendations for FY 90 by at least \$180.3 million.

Medical care is not the only program that would be adversely affected if the budget proposals were implemented. Under the Administration's FY 90 blueprint, funding for the Department of Veterans' Benefits, which is responsible for the adjudication of claims for compensation, pension and education benefits as well as home loan guarantees and burial benefits, is \$30 million short of a current services level.

The Department's employment level would fall 6% from the 1988 level of 12,872. This, despite the fact that, since 1979, more than one-third of the DVB (benefits counselors) workforce has been cut, which has resulted in a continuing deterioration in timeliness and quality of service to veterans.

Other Administration recommendations:

- increase from 1% to 3.8% the origination fee charged a veteran for a VA-guaranteed home loan; repeal the recently-reinstated travel allowance eligibility provisions to allow only veterans in need of special transportation or those who live 100 miles or more from a VA medical facility to receive the benefit; and

- reduce medical and prosthetic research by \$12.9 million.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee has scheduled budget hearings in early February.

NOTE: The impact of these projected shortfalls and reductions of services would be a severe blow to veterans' entitlements -- your entitlements and the services you may need. Drop a letter to your congressional representatives and encourage them to help preserve veterans benefits and entitlements. Listed below are Alaska's Senators and Representative.

Senator Ted Stevens  
U.S. Senate  
522 Hart Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Local Phone #: 907-271-5915

Senator Frank Murkowski  
U.S. Senate 522 Hart Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Local Phone # 907-271-3735

Representative Don Young  
House of Representatives  
2331 Rayburn Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Local Phone # 907-271-5978



### DID YOU KNOW? ★ DID YOU KNOW?

Burial in a National Cemetery is available to a veteran's widow, minor children, unmarried children under the age of 23 attending school and under certain conditions to unmarried adult children

BY FOSTER, GRUENBERG, NAVARRE,  
GRUSSENDORF, SHARP, ZAWACKI, GOLL,  
MENARD, SHULTZ, M.DAVIS, C.DAVIS,  
COLLINS, HUDSON, BOUCHER, CATO,  
ULMER, BARNES AND KOPONEN

1 IN THE HOUSE

2

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 16

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

SIXTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5

Relating to medical benefits for veter-

6

ans.

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BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

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WHEREAS comprehensive health care is a benefit that veterans have

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earned through their service to our country; and

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WHEREAS comprehensive health care benefits for veterans have histor-

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ically included coverage for the costs of heart transplants when medically

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necessary or desirable; and

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WHEREAS the federal Veterans Administration is currently reviewing its

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policy of covering heart transplants for veterans under their health bene-

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fits, and this coverage may be restricted or eliminated; and

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WHEREAS restricting or denying heart transplant coverage to veterans

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would unfairly deny to them their right to comprehensive health care;

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BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that heart transplant

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coverage should remain part of the comprehensive health care package that

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is available to veterans.

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COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Dan Quayle,

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Vice-President of the United States and President of the United States

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Senate; the Honorable Jim Wright, Speaker of the United States House of

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Representatives; Edward J. Derwinski, Administrator of Veterans Affairs;

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and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S.

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Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the

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Alaska delegation in Congress.

## FISCAL NOTE

**REQUEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: Medical Benefits for Veterans

Agency Affected: \_\_\_\_\_  
BRU: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor: Foster et.al.  
Requestor: House HESS

Components: \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPENDITURES/REVENUES:** (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>

<b>CAPITAL</b>						
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<b>REVENUE</b>						
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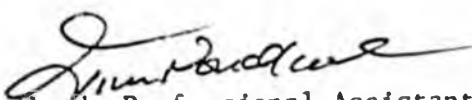
**FUNDING:** (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
<b>TOTAL</b>						

**POSITIONS:**

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

**ANALYSIS :** (Attach a separate page if necessary)



Prepared by: Jim Nordlund, Professional Assistant Phone: 465-3759  
Division: House HESS Committee Date: 4-13-89

Approved by Commissioner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Distribution (by preparer):  
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