

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3043

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program establishing a patient self-scheduling appointment system, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 9, 2016

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mrs. ERNST) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program establishing a patient self-scheduling appointment system, 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 “Faster Care for Vet-
5 erans Act of 2016”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) In June 2014, an internal audit conducted
9 by the Department of Veterans Affairs found more

1 than 120,000 veterans waited at least 90 days for
2 appointments for health care or never received ap-
3 pointments.

4 (2) One year following such audit, and despite
5 the Department handling more appointments than in
6 previous years, reports indicate that the number of
7 veterans waiting 30 days or more for health care in-
8 creased by 50 percent.

9 (3) In 2008, the Inspector General of the De-
10 partment of Veterans Affairs estimated that 18 per-
11 cent of outpatient appointment slots went unfilled
12 because of patient no-shows or because facility per-
13 sonnel did not refill canceled appointments.

14 (4) Wait times are not unique to the Depart-
15 ment of Veterans Affairs. The average wait time in
16 the private sector is more than 18 days, but private
17 sector hospitals and health systems are now
18 leveraging technology to eliminate wait times and
19 ensure that every available appointment is used.

20 (5) In June 2015, the Institute of Medicine of
21 the National Academy of Sciences called for a pa-
22 tient-oriented scheduling platform that allows pa-
23 tients to self-schedule care online at any time.

1 **SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM ESTABLISHING A PATIENT SELF-**
2 **SCHEDULING APPOINTMENT SYSTEM.**

3 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—Not later than 120 days after
4 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
5 Veterans Affairs shall commence a pilot program under
6 which veterans use an Internet website to schedule and
7 confirm appointments for health care at medical facilities
8 of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

9 (b) SELECTION OF LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall
10 select not fewer than three Veterans Integrated Services
11 Networks in which to carry out the pilot program under
12 subsection (a).

13 (c) CONTRACTS.—

14 (1) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary shall seek to
15 enter into a contract with one or more contractors
16 that are able to meet the criteria under paragraph
17 (3) to provide the scheduling and confirmation capa-
18 bility described in subsection (a).

19 (2) NOTICE OF COMPETITION.—

20 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days
21 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
22 Secretary shall issue a request for proposals for
23 the contract described in paragraph (1).

24 (B) OPEN REQUEST.—The request for pro-
25 posals issued under subparagraph (A) shall be

1 full and open to any contractor that is able to
2 meet the criteria under paragraph (3).

3 (3) SELECTION OF VENDORS.—Not later than
4 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
5 the Secretary shall enter into a contract with one or
6 more contractors that have an existing commercially
7 available online patient self-scheduling capability
8 that—

9 (A) allows patients to self-schedule, con-
10 firm, and modify outpatient and specialty care
11 appointments in real time through an Internet
12 website;

13 (B) makes available, in real time, any ap-
14 pointments that were previously filled but later
15 canceled by other patients; and

16 (C) allows patients to use the online sched-
17 uling capability 24 hours per day, seven days
18 per week.

19 (4) INTEGRATION WITH EXISTING INFRASTRUC-
20 TURE.—The Secretary shall ensure that a contractor
21 awarded a contract under this section is able to inte-
22 grate the online scheduling capability of the con-
23 tractor with the Veterans Health Information Sys-
24 tems and Technology Architecture of the Depart-
25 ment.

1 (d) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided by para-
3 graph (2), the Secretary shall carry out the pilot
4 program under subsection (a) during the 18-month
5 period beginning on the commencement of the pilot
6 program.

7 (2) EXTENSION.—The Secretary may extend
8 the duration of the pilot program under subsection
9 (a), and may expand the selection of Veterans Inte-
10 grated Services Networks under subsection (b), if
11 the Secretary determines that the pilot program is
12 reducing the wait times of veterans seeking health
13 care from the Department and ensuring that more
14 available appointment times are filled.

15 (e) REPORT.—Not later than one year after com-
16 mencing the pilot program under subsection (a), the Sec-
17 retary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
18 of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of
19 the House of Representatives a report on the outcomes
20 of the pilot program, including—

21 (1) whether the pilot program demonstrated—
22 (A) improvements to the ability of veterans
23 to schedule appointments for the receipt of
24 health care from the Department; and

1 (B) a reduction in wait times for such ap-
2 pointments; and

3 (2) such recommendations for expanding the
4 pilot program to additional Veterans Integrated
5 Services Networks as the Secretary considers appro-
6 priate.

7 (f) USE OF AMOUNTS OTHERWISE APPROPRIATED.—
8 No additional amounts are authorized to be appropriated
9 to carry out the pilot program under subsection (a) and
10 such pilot program shall be carried out using amounts oth-
11 erwise made available to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
12 for the medical support and compliance account of the
13 Veterans Health Administration.

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