

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 110

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 24, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman WAYNE P. DEANGELO

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Assemblyman RAJ MUKHERJI

District 33 (Hudson)

SYNOPSIS

Urges President and Congress to enact legislation requiring Department of Veterans Affairs provide dental care for eligible veterans.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/16/2020)

1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging the President of the United
2 States and Congress to enact legislation requiring that the
3 Department of Veterans Affairs provide dental care for eligible
4 veterans.
5
6 **WHEREAS**, Veterans of the United States Armed Forces deserve high-
7 quality health care services for all they have done to safeguard the
8 freedom and security of this nation; and
9 **WHEREAS**, President Lincoln stated in his second inaugural address
10 that it was this nation’s duty “to care for him who shall have borne
11 the battle and for his widow, and his orphan”; and
12 **WHEREAS**, Today, the United States has the most comprehensive
13 system of veteran’s assistance in the world with the Department of
14 Veterans Affairs providing health care, financial assistance, and
15 burial benefits to nearly nine million eligible veterans; and
16 **WHEREAS**, Those enrolled with the department have access to
17 preventative and emergency care as well as inpatient hospital
18 services; and
19 **WHEREAS**, Although a number of health services are widely available,
20 dental care is limited to those veterans with service connected
21 dental conditions, service connected disabilities that meet specific
22 criteria, or service connected disabilities that are one-hundred
23 percent or greater as well as those veterans who are former
24 prisoners of war, participating in vocational rehabilitation
25 programs, or experiencing homelessness; and
26 **WHEREAS**, Veterans who fall outside of these designated groups are
27 left to finance their own dental care; and
28 **WHEREAS**, The department currently offers discounted dental
29 coverage through a private insurer which provides diagnostic,
30 preventative, surgical, and restorative services, but paying for this
31 insurance can pose a challenge for low income veterans; and
32 **WHEREAS**, Studies have shown that poor oral hygiene can lead to a
33 number of serious health problems such as heart disease, dementia,
34 pneumonia, and diabetes; and
35 **WHEREAS**, Federal legislation has been introduced to require the
36 Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish dental care in the same
37 manner as any other medical service offered by the department and
38 eliminate the current limits on dental care provided by the Veterans
39 Affairs health system; and
40 **WHEREAS**, This legislation will improve the overall health and well-
41 being of our veterans and it is another way for this nation to express
42 its appreciation for their service; and
43 **WHEREAS**, Veterans should not have to forgo dental treatment because
44 of their ability to pay; now, therefore,
45
46 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the General Assembly of the State of New*
47 *Jersey:*

1. This House urges the President of the United States and Congress to enact legislation requiring that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs furnish dental care in the same manner as any other medical service offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the President of the United States, Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate, Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress elected from this State.

STATEMENT

This resolution urges the President of the United States and Congress to enact legislation requiring that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs furnish dental care in the same manner as any other medical service offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Department of Veterans Affairs currently administers one of the most complex and comprehensive healthcare systems in the world. It serves more than nine million veterans across the country and is one of the many ways in which this nation expresses its gratitude to the men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

The United States has long recognized the obligation it has to care for its veterans. President Lincoln famously stated in his second inaugural address that it was this nation’s responsibility “to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.” Today, these words guide the work of the department and serve as its official motto. Veterans who served in all branches of the armed forces and did not receive a dishonorable discharge are eligible for health care, financial assistance, and burial benefits.

Despite the large number of services available through the Veterans Affairs healthcare system, dental care is only provided to certain groups of veterans. Current law limits eligibility for dental care to those veterans with service connected dental conditions, service connected disabilities that meet specific criteria, or service connected disabilities that are one-hundred percent and greater as well as those veterans who are former prisoners of war, participating in vocational rehabilitation programs, or experiencing homelessness. Veterans who fall outside of these designated groups are left to finance their own dental care. While the Department of Veterans Affairs does offer discounted dental insurance through a private insurer, this can pose a challenge for low-income veterans. Rather than incur the added expense of dental care, many veterans forgo it altogether. This decision can put them at risk for a number

1 of health problems such as heart disease, dementia, pneumonia, and
2 diabetes.

3 Federal legislation has been introduced which will require the
4 Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish dental care in the same
5 manner as any other medical service offered by the department
6 thereby eliminating the current limits imposed on dental care. This
7 House urges the President of the United States and Congress to
8 enact this legislation so we can continue to ensure that these brave
9 Americans receive the care they need. Every veteran, regardless of
10 ability to pay, deserves high-quality healthcare for all they have
11 done to safeguard the freedoms we cherish.