

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 58

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 16, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator PATRICK J. DIEGNAN, JR.

District 18 (Middlesex)

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.



1 **A SENATE RESOLUTION** urging the President of the United States
 2 and Congress to enact legislation requiring that the Department
 3 of Veterans Affairs provide dental care for eligible veterans.

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 5 **WHEREAS**, Veterans of the United States Armed Forces deserve high-
 6 quality health care services for all they have done to safeguard the
 7 freedom and security of this nation; and

8 **WHEREAS**, President Lincoln stated in his second inaugural address
 9 that it was this nation’s duty “to care for him who shall have borne
 10 the battle and for his widow, and his orphan”; and

11 **WHEREAS**, Today, the United States has the most comprehensive
 12 system of veteran’s assistance in the world with the Department of
 13 Veterans Affairs providing health care, financial assistance, and
 14 burial benefits to nearly nine million eligible veterans; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Those enrolled with the department have access to
 16 preventative and emergency care as well as inpatient hospital
 17 services; and

18 **WHEREAS**, Although a number of health services are widely available,
 19 dental care is limited to those veterans with service connected
 20 dental conditions, service connected disabilities that meet specific
 21 criteria, or service connected disabilities that are one-hundred
 22 percent or greater as well as those veterans who are former
 23 prisoners of war, participating in vocational rehabilitation
 24 programs, or experiencing homelessness; and

25 **WHEREAS**, Veterans who fall outside of these designated groups are
 26 left to finance their own dental care; and

27 **WHEREAS**, The department currently offers discounted dental
 28 coverage through a private insurer which provides diagnostic,
 29 preventative, surgical, and restorative services, but paying for this
 30 insurance can pose a challenge for low income veterans; and

31 **WHEREAS**, Studies have shown that poor oral hygiene can lead to a
 32 number of serious health problems such as heart disease, dementia,
 33 pneumonia, and diabetes; and

34 **WHEREAS**, Federal legislation has been introduced to require the
 35 Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish dental care in the same
 36 manner as any other medical service offered by the department and
 37 eliminate the current limits on dental care provided by the Veterans
 38 Affairs health system; and

39 **WHEREAS**, This legislation will improve the overall health and well-
 40 being of our veterans and it is another way for this nation to express
 41 its appreciation for their service; and

42 **WHEREAS**, Veterans should not have to forgo dental treatment because
 43 of their ability to pay; now, therefore,

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 45 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

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 47 1. This House urges the President of the United States and
 48 Congress to enact legislation requiring that the Secretary of

1 Veterans Affairs furnish dental care in the same manner as any
2 other medical service offered by the Department of Veterans
3 Affairs.

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5 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
6 shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the President
7 of the United States, Majority and Minority Leaders of the United
8 States Senate, Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of
9 Representatives, and each member of Congress elected from this
10 State.

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

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

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

SR58 DIEGNAN

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