



RESOURCES AND ELIGIBILITY FOR THE VA COMPREHENSIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM

The Issue

On June 6, 2018, President Trump signed into law the VA MISSION Act, authorizing the expansion of eligibility to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (Caregiver Program) to those injured before September 11, 2001. Since the program began in 2010, it has been restricted to veterans injured on or after 9/11. Upon verification of the program's Information Technology system, expected October 2019, the program will first be open to those veterans catastrophically injured in service on or before May 7, 1975. Two years from the day of that expansion, those injured in service during any era will be eligible to apply. This will finally correct a shameful inequity that has gone on for too long, and asked caregivers and veterans to endure far too much.

Caregivers are the most important component of rehabilitation and eventual recovery for veterans with catastrophic injuries. Their well-being directly impacts the care veterans receive. The quick and efficient implementation of this program's expansion is critical to ensuring veterans' quality of life. The program currently provides respite care, a monthly stipend, paid travel expenses to attend veterans' medical appointments, and health care through CHAMPVA. Without these services, caregivers are likely to exhaust their savings, experience burnout, or suffer their own injury or illness. This means the veteran is more likely to be placed in an institutional setting that is far more costly to the taxpayer.

As the largest cohort of veterans (Vietnam era) ages, the demand for long-term care resources will continue to grow significantly. By providing their caregivers the means to care for them at home, with family, they will live more fulfilling lives while also delaying the costs of institutional care. That is why PVA urges Congress to properly resource the Caregiver Program and to pass legislation that would also open eligibility to those veterans whose catastrophic illnesses are a result of service. Additionally, Congress must make the stipend eligible for income credits for the purpose of Social Security, so as to not endanger the financial well-being of those caregivers who may spend their lives in such a role.



PVA's Position

- Congress must pass legislation to make veterans with service-connected illnesses eligible to access VA's Caregiver Program.
- VA must request and Congress must provide sufficient funding for VA's Caregiver Program within the VA's medical services' appropriations.
- Congress must pass legislation to allow primary caregivers to earn income credits for their caregiving work, in order to safeguard their own income security.