

108TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 2063

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a demonstration project on priorities in the scheduling of appointments of veterans for health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 10, 2004

Mr. CONRAD (for himself, Mr. GRAHAM of Florida, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. AKAKA, and Mr. JOHNSON) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a demonstration project on priorities in the scheduling of appointments of veterans for health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. DEMONSTRATION PROJECT ON PRIORITIES IN**  
2 **SCHEDULING OF APPOINTMENTS OF VET-**  
3 **ERANS FOR HEALTH CARE THROUGH THE**  
4 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

5 (a) **PROJECT REQUIRED.**—The Secretary of Veterans  
6 Affairs shall carry out a demonstration project to assess  
7 the feasibility and advisability of providing for priorities  
8 in the scheduling of appointments of veterans for health  
9 care through the Department of Veterans Affairs in ac-  
10 cordance with the following:

11 (1) The Department of Veterans Affairs Wait-  
12 ing Time for Appointments goals (30–30–20) of  
13 2000.

14 (2) The provisions of the Veterans Health Ad-  
15 ministration directive entitled “Priority For Out-  
16 patient Medical Services and Inpatient Hospital  
17 Care” (VHA Directive 2002–059).

18 (3) The provisions of the Veterans Health Ad-  
19 ministration directive entitled “Priority Scheduling  
20 for Outpatient Medical Services and Inpatient Hos-  
21 pital Care for Service Connected Veterans” (VHA  
22 Directive 2003–062), dated October 23, 2003.

23 (b) **PERIOD OF PROJECT.**—The Secretary shall carry  
24 out the demonstration project during the two-year period  
25 beginning on October 1, 2004.

1 (c) LOCATIONS OF PROJECT.—(1) The Secretary  
2 shall carry out the demonstration project throughout each  
3 of three Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs)  
4 selected by the Secretary for purposes of the project.

5 (2) In selecting Veterans Integrated Service Net-  
6 works under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall ensure  
7 that the project is carried out in urban, rural, and highly  
8 rural areas.

9 (d) PROJECT REQUIREMENTS AND AUTHORITIES.—  
10 (1) Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3), in car-  
11 rying out the demonstration project the Secretary shall  
12 schedule appointments for veterans for outpatient medical  
13 services and inpatient hospital care through the Depart-  
14 ment in accordance with the goals and directives referred  
15 to in subsection (a).

16 (2) The veterans covered by the demonstration  
17 project shall include any veterans residing in a Veterans  
18 Integrated Service Network covered by the project, wheth-  
19 er new or current enrollees with the Department and in-  
20 cluding veterans with service-connected disabilities and  
21 veterans with non-service-connected disabilities.

22 (3) The Secretary shall schedule each appointment  
23 under the demonstration project in a Department facility  
24 unless, as determined by the Secretary—

1           (A) the cost of scheduling the appointment in  
2           a Department facility exceeds the cost of scheduling  
3           the appointment in a non-Department facility to an  
4           unreasonable degree; or

5           (B) the scheduling of the appointment in a non-  
6           Department facility is required for medical or other  
7           reasons.

8           (4) In carrying out the demonstration project, the  
9           Secretary may utilize the Preferred Pricing Program  
10          (PPP) of the Department, or similar programs or authori-  
11          ties, in the locations covered by the project.

12          (5) In this subsection, the terms “Department facil-  
13          ity” and “non-Department facility” have the meaning  
14          given such terms in section 1701 of title 38, United States  
15          Code.

16          (e) ANNUAL REPORTS ON WAITING TIMES FOR AP-  
17          POINTMENTS FOR CARE AND SERVICES.—(1) Not later  
18          than January 31 each year, the Secretary shall submit to  
19          the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and  
20          the House of Representatives a report on the waiting  
21          times of veterans for appointments for health care and  
22          services from the Department during the preceding year.

23          (2) Each report under paragraph (1) shall specify,  
24          for the year covered by the report, the following:

1           (A) A tabulation of the waiting time of veterans  
2           for appointments with the Department for each cat-  
3           egory of primary or specialty care or services fur-  
4           nished by the Department, broken out by particular  
5           Department facility and by Veterans Integrated  
6           Service Network.

7           (B) An identification of the categories of spe-  
8           cialty care or services for which there are lengthy  
9           delays for appointments at particular Department  
10          facilities or throughout particular Veterans Inte-  
11          grated Service Networks, and, for each category so  
12          identified, recommendations for the reallocation of  
13          personnel, financial, and other resources to address  
14          such delays.

15          (f) REPORT ON PROJECT.—The report under sub-  
16          section (e) in 2007 shall also include information on the  
17          demonstration project under this section. That informa-  
18          tion shall include—

19               (1) a description of the project, including the  
20               Veterans Integrated Service Networks selected for  
21               the project, the number of veterans covered by the  
22               project, the number and timeliness of appointments  
23               scheduled under the project, and the costs of car-  
24               rying out the project;

- 1           (2) an assessment of the feasibility and advis-  
2           ability of implementing the project nationwide; and  
3           (3) such other information with respect to the  
4           project as the Secretary considers appropriate.

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