

116<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
2<sup>D</sup> SESSION

# S. 850

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## AN ACT

To extend the authorization of appropriations to the Department of Veterans Affairs for purposes of awarding grants to veterans service organizations for the transportation of highly rural veterans.

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. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Highly Rural Veteran  
3 Transportation Program Extension Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO**  
5 **VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS FOR**  
6 **TRANSPORTATION OF HIGHLY RURAL VET-**  
7 **ERANS.**

8 Section 307(d) of the Caregivers and Veterans Omni-  
9 bus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163;  
10 38 U.S.C. 1710 note) is amended by striking “2020” and  
11 inserting “2021”.

12 **SEC. 3. MAKING PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY**  
13 **OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO TRANSPORT INDI-**  
14 **VIDUALS TO AND FROM FACILITIES OF DE-**  
15 **PARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

16 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 111A(a) of title 38,  
17 United States Code, is amended—

18 (1) by striking paragraph (2); and

19 (2) in paragraph (1), by striking “(1)”.

20 (b) **REPORT REQUIRED.**—

21 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than five years  
22 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
23 retary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress  
24 a report on cost savings, performance, and satisfac-  
25 tion of individuals, with respect to—

1 (A) the transport by the Secretary of indi-  
2 viduals under subsection (a) of section 111A of  
3 title 38, United States Code; and

4 (B) the program the establishment of  
5 which was facilitated under subsection (b) of  
6 such section.

7 (2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by para-  
8 graph (1) shall include an assessment of the effect  
9 of emerging health care modalities, including tele-  
10 health and VA Video Connect, on—

11 (A) the transport of individuals described  
12 in paragraph (1)(A);

13 (B) the satisfaction of such individuals  
14 with services described in section 111A(a) of  
15 title 38, United States Code; and

16 (C) the program described in paragraph  
17 (1)(B).

18 (3) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

19 (A) TELEHEALTH.—

20 (i) IN GENERAL.—The term “tele-  
21 health” means the use of electronic infor-  
22 mation and telecommunications tech-  
23 nologies to support and promote long-dis-  
24 tance clinical health care, patient and pro-

1 professional health-related education, public  
2 health, and health administration.

3 (ii) TECHNOLOGIES.—For purposes of  
4 clause (i), telecommunications technologies  
5 include videoconferencing, the internet,  
6 streaming media, and terrestrial and wire-  
7 less communications.

8 (B) VA VIDEO CONNECT.—The term “VA  
9 Video Connect” means the program of the De-  
10 partment of Veterans Affairs to connect vet-  
11 erans with their health care team from any-  
12 where, using encryption to ensure a secure and  
13 private session.

14 (c) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Section 111A(b) of  
15 title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “vet-  
16 erans’ service organizations” and inserting “veterans serv-  
17 ice organizations”.

18 **SEC. 4. MEDICAL EXAMINATION PROTOCOL FOR VOLUN-**  
19 **TEER DRIVERS PARTICIPATING IN PROGRAM**  
20 **OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR VET-**  
21 **ERANS.**

22 Section 111A(b) of title 38, United States Code, is  
23 amended—

24 (1) by inserting “(1)” before “The Secretary”;  
25 and

1           (2) by adding at the end the following new  
2 paragraph:

3           “(2)(A) Not later than 90 days after the date of the  
4 enactment of the Highly Rural Veteran Transportation  
5 Program Extension Act, the Secretary shall develop and  
6 establish a national protocol for the administration of  
7 medical examinations for volunteer drivers to participate  
8 in the program described in paragraph (1).

9           “(B) In developing the protocol required by subpara-  
10 graph (A), the Secretary shall consult with such persons  
11 as the Secretary determines have an interest in the pro-  
12 gram described in paragraph (1).

13           “(C)(i) The Secretary shall implement the protocol  
14 by first conducting a one-year pilot program using the pro-  
15 tocol.

16           “(ii) After conducting the pilot program required by  
17 clause (i), the Secretary shall assess the pilot program and  
18 make such changes to the protocol as the Secretary con-  
19 siders appropriate.

20           “(iii) After making changes to the protocol under  
21 clause (ii), the Secretary shall implement the protocol in  
22 phases during the course of one year.”.

1 **SEC. 5. COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES**  
2 **REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**  
3 **FOR VETERANS.**

4 (a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than one year  
5 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comp-  
6 troller General of the United States shall submit to the  
7 Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the  
8 Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Rep-  
9 resentatives a report on the program the establishment of  
10 which was facilitated under section 111A(b) of title 38,  
11 United States Code.

12 (b) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under sub-  
13 section (a) shall include the following:

14 (1) A description of the program described in  
15 subsection (a), including descriptions of the fol-  
16 lowing:

17 (A) The purpose of the program.

18 (B) The activities carried out under the  
19 program.

20 (2) An assessment of the sufficiency of the pro-  
21 gram with respect to the purpose of the program.

22 (3) An assessment of the cost effectiveness of  
23 the program in relation to alternatives.

24 (4) An assessment of the health benefits for  
25 veterans who have participated in the program.

1           (5) An assessment of the sufficiency of staffing  
2 of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs  
3 who are responsible for facilitating the maintenance  
4 of the program.

5           (6) An assessment, with respect to the purpose  
6 of the program, of the number of vehicles owned by  
7 and operating in conjunction with the program.

8           (7) An assessment of the awareness and usage  
9 of the program by veterans and their families.

10          (8) An assessment of other options for trans-  
11 portation under the program, such as local taxi com-  
12 panies and ridesharing programs such as Uber and  
13 Lyft.

Passed the Senate July 30, 2020.

Attest:

*Secretary.*

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