

October 22, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

The President has signed H.R. 2735 - Veterans Omnibus Health Care Act of 1976. This bill expands the Veterans Administration (VA) medical care program and liberalizes benefit eligibility; extends the VA physician and dentist pay bonus; includes amendments to improve administration of VA benefits.

The bill will:

- authorize mental health services, consultation, professional counseling and training on an outpatient basis for the family members of a service-connected veteran when essential to the treatment and rehabilitation of the veteran; and, at the discretion of the Administrator, for the family members of a non-service-connected inpatient veteran where such services are essential to permit discharge of the veteran from the hospital.
- authorizes outpatient dental care and treatment for a non-service-connected condition of a veteran for which treatment was begun in a hospital and where dental care is necessary to complete hospitalization.
- allows VA to participate in national immunization campaigns, such as the national swine flu effort.
- provides total VA health care benefits for any veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 50 percent or more.
- establishes in statute a system of priorities for outpatient care stressing priority for veterans with service-connected disabilities.
- requires VA to operate at least 10,000 nursing home beds by 1980, an increase from the 8,000 now operated.
- authorizes an expansion of home health services, to include certain home improvements and structural alterations, e.g., ramps and wide doors for disabled veterans.

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