
National Gulf War Resource Center

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September 27, 2013

RE: Suggested Appropriations for the Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act of 2013 (Bill S.851)

Dear Representative or Senator:

In a previous letter, we sent in our firm support for the Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act of 2013 (S.851) which extends many needed benefits to family caregivers of seriously injured veterans of all pre-9/11 eras. Under Public Law 111-163, the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, these exact benefits have rightly been given to those of the post-9/11 era. The only question that the National Gulf War Resource Center (NGWRC) has seen from it's correspondence from Congressmen, Congresswomen, and Senators is of where the \$9.5 billion dollars, estimated by the Congressional Budget Office during the 2014-2018 period, would come from.

We could easily make the argument, as many have, that this cost should be considered in as part of the wars that these veterans and their families have endured, not only during their service, but also for the fight they endure from their injuries and illnesses upon their return. However, the NGWRC would like to make out a very important point when looking at the cost of this bill. In the Senate Report 113-107, dated September 17, 2013, it is quoted in part that the:

“VA is obligated to provide nursing home care for veterans who need such care and meet 1 of the following criteria: a service-connected disability rating of seventy percent or more; a need for nursing home care for a service-connected disability; or a rating of sixty percent when either unemployable or permanently and totally disabled. The Department's fiscal year 2014 budget request included \$4,928,496,000 for long-term institutional care for the care of an estimated 42,465 veterans per day. This amounts to an average cost of \$116,060 per veteran a year.

Receiving long-term care in the private sector, which is an option for eligible veterans, is costly as well. According to a survey conducted in 2012 by MetLife's Mature Market Institute, the average cost of a private room in a nursing home in the United States was \$90,520 per year. In contrast, as of July 2013, the cost of the annual stipend of the Caregiver program, the most expensive aspect of the program, is approximately \$18,203 per caregiver, nearly one-tenth the cost of institutional long-term care.”

Even though there is much more great information and statistics given in this Senate Report that supports S.851, the one thing that should really stand out in this is that the VA has budgeted \$4,928,496,000 for long-term institutional care of veterans for the fiscal year 2014 alone. An estimated 42,465 veterans per day. Giving an average cost of \$116,060 per veteran annually. **This doesn't include one particular era of veteran either!** Later in this quote it is written that "as of July 2013, the cost of the annual stipend of the Caregiver program, the most expensive aspect of the program, is approximately \$18,203 per caregiver, **nearly one-tenth the cost of institutional long-term care.**" So in looking at the estimated overall cost for S.851 (from the Congressional Budget Office) of \$9.5 billion for the periods from 2014-2018, keep in mind that some of these same pre-9/11 veterans that have been in the VA long-term institutions may be pulled out of the the same long-term institutional care that the VA has budgeted for almost \$5 billion dollars in 2014 alone! This means that when the Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act of 2013 is enacted, the VA should actually get returns from their budget for the long-term institutionalized veterans! If it's still an issue of needing to get appropriations for S.851, to get it off the ground and started, then there is the possibility of using some of the money that the VA is budgeted for its pilot programs. These pilot program funds were used when the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 was started.

For years and even decades, families have become the unsung heroes as being home caregivers of seriously injured veterans. Many have lost jobs because they have had to cut back on hours to care for their loved one. Some simply quit because of the daunting task that it becomes. But yet the caregiver and the veteran they care for would not have it any other way. To have the veteran at home, living amongst their family. S.851 is nothing but a win-win situation for all of those involved.

Again, we support the Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act of 2013, Bill S.851!.

Sincerely,

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President
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