

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 4

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By: ~~Senator Garagiola~~ Senators Garagiola, Astle, Della, Edwards, Exum, Kelley, Klausmeier, Middleton, and Pugh

Introduced and read first time: February 2, 2007

Assigned to: Finance

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 16, 2007

RESOLUTION NO. _____

1 A Senate Joint Resolution concerning

2 **Veterans Health Care Budget Reform**

3 FOR the purpose of urging the Maryland Congressional Delegation and the United
4 States Congress to support veterans health care budget reform to allow direct
5 funding instead of discretionary funding; and generally relating to the veterans
6 health care budget.

7 WHEREAS, Federal discretionary funding is controlled by the Executive
8 Branch and Congress through the budget and appropriations process; and

9 WHEREAS, Direct funding provides the Department of Veterans Affairs with a
10 reliable, predictable, and consistent source of funding to provide timely, efficient, and
11 high-quality health care for our veterans; and

12 WHEREAS, Currently almost 90% of federal health care spending is direct
13 rather than discretionary, and only funding for active duty military, Native
14 Americans, and veterans health care is subject to the discretion of Congress; and

15 WHEREAS, Discretionary funding lags behind both medical inflation and the
16 increased demand for services; for example, the enrollment for veterans health care
17 increased 134% between fiscal years 1996 and 2004 and funding, however, only
18 increased 34% during the same period when adjusted to 1996 dollars; and

EXPLANATION:

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken by amendment.



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1 WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs is the largest integrated
2 health care system in the United States and has four critical health care missions: to
3 provide health care to veterans, to educate and train health care personnel, to conduct
4 medical research, and to serve as a backup to the Department of Defense and support
5 communities in times of crisis; and

6 WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs operates 157 hospitals, with at
7 least one in each of the contiguous states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs operates more than 850
10 ambulatory care and community-based outpatient clinics, 132 nursing homes, 42
11 residential rehabilitation treatment programs, and 88 home care programs; and

12 WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs provides a wide range of
13 specialized services to meet the unique needs of veterans including spinal cord injury
14 and dysfunction care and rehabilitation, blind rehabilitation, traumatic brain injury
15 care, post-traumatic stress disorder treatment, amputee care and prosthetics
16 programs, mental health and substance abuse programs, and long-term care
17 programs; and

18 WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs health care system is grossly
19 underfunded, and had funding for the Department's medical programs not been
20 flat-lined as the system sought to admit newly eligible veterans following the
21 eligibility reform legislation in 1996, the current veterans health care budget would be
22 approximately \$10,000,000,000 more; and

23 WHEREAS, In a spirit of bipartisan accommodation, members of Congress
24 should collectively resolve the problem of discretionary funding and jointly fashion an
25 acceptable formula for funding the medical programs of the Department of Veterans
26 Affairs; now, therefore, be it

27 **RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,** That the
28 General Assembly expresses its profound gratitude for the sacrifices made by
29 veterans, including but not limited to those who suffer from medical or mental health
30 problems resulting from injuries that occurred while serving in the United States
31 Armed Forces at home or abroad; and be it further

32 **RESOLVED,** That the General Assembly urges the Maryland Congressional
33 Delegation and all members of Congress to support legislation for veterans health care
34 budget reform to allow assured funding; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
2 Legislative Services to the Honorable Martin O'Malley, Governor of Maryland; the
3 Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of the Senate of Maryland; and the
4 Honorable Michael E. Busch, Speaker of the House of Delegates; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
6 Legislative Services to President George W. Bush, The White House, Washington,
7 D.C. 20500; and to the Maryland Congressional Delegation: Senators Barbara A.
8 Mikulski and Benjamin L. Cardin, Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510;
9 and Representatives Wayne T. Gilchrest, C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger III, John P.
10 Sarbanes, Albert R. Wynn, Steny Hamilton Hoyer, Roscoe G. Bartlett, Elijah E.
11 Cummings, and Christopher Van Hollen, Jr., House Office Building, Washington, D.C.
12 20515.

Approved:

President of the Senate.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.