

# Department of Veterans Affairs Income Eligibility Standardization Act

**Cosponsors:** Welch,

**Organizational Support:** American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), AMVETS, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Business Leaders for Health Care Transformation, Center for Health & Democracy, Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition of Veteran Organizations, Common Defense, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), For All, Health Care Voices, Honor the Earth, Hunger Free America, Justice in Aging, Save our VA (SOVA), SMART Recovery, Sojourners, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW),

**Background:** Currently, 4.7 million Priority Group 8 veterans do not have access to health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

One of the hurdles in getting new veterans to access care and services through the VA is the unnecessarily bureaucratic enrolment process. Veterans face complex eligibility requirements to determine whether they can receive VA health care.

Veterans in Priority Group 8 do not have a compensable service-connected disability, their gross household income is above the VA national income threshold (\$43,834) and the geographically-adjusted income threshold for their resident location, and they agree to pay copays. Because of budgetary constraints, VA ended enrollment of veterans in priority group 8 in 2003. However, veterans who were enrolled at that time were allowed to remain in VA's health care system. Statute gives the Secretary discretionary authority to provide care to these veterans if VA resources permit and in 2009 VA increased the national income threshold to its current level

To simplify the system and ensure veterans eligible for Priority Group 8 have access to health care, this bill requires the Secretary to eliminate all subcategories of Priority Group 8 and ensure veterans eligible for Priority Group 8 can enroll in VA health care.

The Veterans Affairs Income Eligibility Standardization Act reduces the complexity of eligibility in Priority Group 8 and opens the aperture for more veterans to access care, fulfilling our nation's promise to its veterans and ensuring veterans can access care regardless of income.

## Section-by-Section

**Sec. 1:** Short Title

**Sec. 2:** Directs the Secretary to eliminate all subcategories of Priority Group 8 and ensure that all veterans eligible for Priority Group 8 may enroll in the patient enrollment system to receive health care through the Department.

**Sec. 3:** Directs the Secretary to ensure that all veterans, once enrolled in the patient enrollment system, may remain enrolled and receive care subject to cost sharing.