

Support the *Veterans Equal Access Amendment* to the FY2016 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill

Amendment Text:

None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to implement Veterans Health Administration directive 2011-004 regarding "Access to clinical programs for veterans participating in State-approved marijuana programs".

Current Policy – the reason why veterans are being denied equal access:

Veterans who are reliant on the VA for their healthcare are denied equal access to state medical marijuana programs. The current VA policy on medical marijuana, *VHA Directive 2011-004*, not only prohibits VA physicians from writing state medical marijuana recommendation forms, it forbids them from even offering opinions on whether a veteran patient could benefit or harm their health by participating in a state medical marijuana program. This is tantamount to a gag order on VA physicians! Moreover, this policy denies veterans equal access to state-authorized medical marijuana programs that other patients in these states are able to utilize.

Purpose of the Amendment – allow veterans to have the same access as civilians:

To allow VA physicians to recommend medical marijuana to veteran patients in accordance with state laws that authorize the medical use of marijuana. This would allow veterans who receive the medical care from the VA to be eligible to obtain medical marijuana to treat conditions such as chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that may have been inflicted upon the veteran-patient during service to their country.

What the Amendment does:

- The amendment would provide that VA physicians would no longer be denied the ability to provide a written recommendation to veteran patients in their care who they believe would benefit from medical marijuana therapy
- The amendment would provide that Veterans would no longer be forced outside of the VA system – at their own expense – to seek a simple recommendation for treatment for a debilitating condition that is granted to them by state law
- American Chronic Pain Association has estimated that 25 million veterans are living with chronic pain in the USA
- Approximately 22 veterans per day are committing suicide, many as a result of PTSD
- States that currently have some form of medical marijuana patient protection (36 + DC and Guam): Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin

What the Amendment does not do:

- The amendment does not require V.A. physicians to violate federal law, as recommending the therapeutic use of marijuana is protected speech under ruling in *Conant v. Walters*, (9th Cir. 2002) 309 F.3d 629, cert denied Oct. 14, 2003)
- The amendment does not authorize the possession or use of marijuana for any purposes on federal property

**Lift the gag order on V.A. physicians.
Restore respect the doctor-patient relationship.**

Vote YES on the Veterans Equal Access Amendment!

Headquarters

1300 Clay Street, Suite 600, Oakland CA 94612
PHONE: 510.251.1856

National Office

1806 Vernon St. NW, Suite 100, Washington DC 20009
PHONE: 202.857.4272 FAX: 202.857.4273

General Information

WEB: www.AmericansForSafeAccess.org
TOLL FREE: 1.888.939.4367