

Support the *Veterans Equal Access Amendment* to the Military Construction & Veterans Affairs & Related Agencies Appropriations Act (HR 44486)

Amendment Sponsors: Blumenauer, Farr, Rohrabacher

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 current VA policy on medical marijuana, *VHA Directive 2011-004*, specifically prohibits VA physicians from completing forms brought by their patients seeking recommendations or opinions regarding a veteran’s participation in a state-authorized marijuana program. 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:

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.

- 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
- Experts have estimated that 25 million veterans are living with chronic pain in the United States
- Approximately 22 veterans per day are committing suicide, many as a result of PTSD
- States that currently allow for the use of medical marijuana under the recommendation of a physician (21 and DC): **Alaska**, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington
- States that allow severe/chronic pain (18): Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington
- States that currently allow PTSD as a condition (9): California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon

What the Amendment does not do:

- The amendment does not change the legal status of marijuana under federal law.
- The amendment does authorize the possession or use of marijuana for any purposes on federal property

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