

Healthcare for Our Troops Act

Senator Tammy Baldwin

The 29th Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Hokanson, listed his most pressing concern during his tenure as healthcare access for members. The National Guard Association of the United States estimates that 16% (roughly 130,000 individuals) in the National Guard do not have health insurance. With the significant increase in reliance on the National Guard to fill national security gaps both domestically and internationally, medical readiness of our reserve component servicemembers is critical. This bill would help servicemembers maintain health insurance regardless of duty status, allowing them to continue treatment for illness and injuries that affect medical readiness.

The National Guard and Reserve military service components depend on collective medical events and a provider voucher system to meet readiness requirements. This system often precludes continuity of care, provider choice, and preventative treatment, undermining readiness for both defense support of civil authorities (DSCA) and large-scale combat operations.

This legislation will increase both short and long-term readiness for critical forces, as well as provide a valuable service incentive to support recruitment and retention goals. The legislation will also make mental health care more affordable to our servicemembers.

The Healthcare for Our Troops Act would—

Ensure every service member has healthcare

- Provide premium-free TRICARE Reserve Select coverage to all members of the Selected Reserve
- Provide all servicemembers with access to health services provided by network providers with no cost-sharing burden
- Facilitate more affordable access to critical preventive medical services as well as mental health care

Improve readiness

- Maximize readiness for no-notice or short-notice deployments
- Provide comprehensive treatment for illnesses and injuries that affect medical readiness
- Mandate DOD provide servicemembers with the option to complete annual medical readiness requirements with their preferred civilian provider, allowing for continuity of care and provider choice
- Reduce reliance on collective medical events that take up valuable training time

Provide incentives for service and hiring service members

- Provide an incentive for employers to hire Guard and Reserve members by lessening demand for employer-sponsored healthcare plans

Legislative History—In the 117th Congress, this bill was a companion to bipartisan legislation in the House led by Rep. Kim (D-NJ) and Rep. Trent Kelly (R-MS) with a group of 27 bipartisan cosponsors. Senator Baldwin introduced a similar bill for dental care, the Dental Care for Our Troops Act, in the 118th Congress.

Support—National Guard Association of the United States, Wisconsin National Guard Association, Wisconsin National Guard Enlisted Association, Reserve Organization of America