

Veterans-Specific Education for Tomorrow's Health Professionals (VET HP) Act: Training Health Professionals to Enhance the Quality of Health Care for Veterans

*Introduced by Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin
And Republican Senator Thom Tillis*

*Vet HP Act will expand access to pre-health shadowing opportunities
and increase future health professionals' exposure to veteran-specific
health needs*

Issue

The current system for medical school admissions is imperfect.

- Medical school, physical therapy school, nursing school, and physician assistant school all either require or recommend clinical observation hours as part of an admission application, to name a few health professions, but there is no formal process to apply for these opportunities.
- Opportunities to shadow are limited – students who are from or attend schools outside major cities, as well as those whose families lack connections to the medical community, find it harder to shadow and are disadvantaged in medical school admissions. This places an unfair burden on otherwise qualified students who come from less affluent communities or rural areas, or who may not have physician connections.
- ❖ **Men and women who have served in the armed forces have specific medical needs such as exposure-based conditions and mental health issues. A greater understanding of veterans' specific health needs and experiences is critical for physicians.**

Solution

The VET HP Act directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out a one-year pilot program at no less than five VA medical centers to provide undergraduate students a clinical observation experience. The VET HP Act:

- Provides a pathway for pre-health students to gain valuable shadowing hours and levels the playing field in admissions to health professions schools.
- Expands the pool of health providers and fosters an early awareness to the specific health care needs of veterans, potentially making a dent in the health professions shortage.
- ❖ The VA shall select undergraduate students who are U.S. citizens enrolled in an accredited program of study to participate in the program, prioritizing students in health professional shortage area, first generation college students, students referred by minority-serving institutions, and veterans.

Of all the duties of government, few are as sacred as delivering quality care to our veterans. Those willing to sacrifice for our country deserve the absolute best in medical care. Delivering this care to veterans requires the VHA system to be thoroughly staffed with talented physicians who are dedicated to the VHA's mission.