



Durbin introduces legislation to make the VA smoke-free

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WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), joined by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Ed Markey (D-MA), Jack Reed (D-RI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Patty Murray (D-WA), announced legislation to prohibit smoking at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The legislation would repeal an antiquated 1992 law that requires the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to furnish and maintain designated indoor or outdoor smoking areas. Supported by the Department

of Veterans Affairs, the bill would bring the VA in line with smoke-free policies across the federal government and in the private health care system.



“Simply put, this bill will help save lives. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, only 20% of veterans enrolled in the VA health care system are smokers,” said Durbin. “We must do everything we can to protect the brave men and women — who

risked life and limb to protect us — from the deadly epidemic of tobacco use, secondhand smoke, and its effects. The health and well-being of our nation's veterans should be treated with the utmost care and attention across the VA. For their lifetime of service and sacrifice, we owe them nothing less.”

The overwhelming majority of America's private health care systems and facilities, most Department of Defense medical facilities, and all federal government buildings, are smoke-free. Yet there are nearly 1,000 designated indoor or outdoor smoking spaces at VHA facilities across the country — at least one in every state. In addition to the health concerns, such spaces are difficult to maintain and cost the VA more than \$1.2 million annually. According the Congressional Budget Office, this bill would not impact spending and would save the VA money in the long run.

Legislation to make the VA smoke-free is supported by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and more than three dozen additional medical organizations.