



# With Veterans Day Approaching, Duckworth Introduces Suite of Bills to Improve VA Services

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WASHINGTON, D.C.— Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today introduced three bills addressing Veteran suicide, homelessness, and access to healthcare. Duckworth’s proposals—the *Veteran Employment and Child Care Access Act*, *Access to Contraception Expansion for Veterans (ACE Veterans) Act* and *Post 9/11 Veteran Suicide Prevention Counseling Act*—would increase access to childcare services as well as contraceptives and help reduce Veteran suicide. The three bills are supported by her House and Senate colleagues.

“Our Veterans deserve our full support when they return home from the military, including making it easier for them to access the childcare and healthcare services they have earned,” Duckworth said. “These bills would help address key issues facing Veterans, such as the high cost of childcare being a barrier to overcoming homelessness, elevated suicide rates and difficulty accessing contraception. I’m proud to be working with Senator Warren and Representatives Correa and Underwood on these bills and to be introducing them in the Senate.”

The following Veteran support bills were introduced this week by Senator Duckworth:

The *Veteran Employment and Child Care Access Act* would expand a VA pilot program modeled after the Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs’ “Tiny Boots” program to help ensure Veterans seeking employment training have access to, which is especially important for low-income Veterans on the cusp of homelessness or those already homeless. This legislation has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Lou Correa (D-CA-46).

The *Access to Contraception Expansion for Veterans (ACE Veterans) Act* would require providers at VA to inform patients of their option to request a full-year of contraception

at the time of prescription being issued. As the largest integrated healthcare system in the United States, the VA is uniquely positioned to take on this issue. According to VA's Center for Health Equity, 64 percent of women Veterans enrolled in VA with prescriptions for hormonal contraceptives experience a gap in their birth control for at least seven days every year. This legislation has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congresswoman Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14) and is being co-sponsored by U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

The *Post 9/11 Veteran Suicide Prevention Counseling Act* would require VA to work with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) to develop training specific to suicide prevention and the use of lethal means for Post-9/11 Veterans. This training would be for all providers at VA to utilize – not just mental healthcare providers. The legislation would also require VA, working with the same experts, to develop a standard form of counseling on suicide prevention and lethal means for Post-9/11 Veterans. This legislation has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congresswoman Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14).

Duckworth has been a leader on issues impacting Veterans' healthcare. In June of this year, she [introduced](#) legislation to support LGBT Veterans by amending the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) definition of “minority group member” to explicitly include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Veterans. She also [introduced](#) a bill with U.S. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) to stop forcing Veterans to pay out-of-pocket costs for essential preventive health medications and prescription drugs and add preventive medications and services to the list of no-fee treatments that VA covers.

Earlier this year, Duckworth [re-introduced](#) three bills to protect and support Veterans and servicemembers. Her proposals—the *Veterans Visa and Protection Act*, *HOPE Act* and *I-VETS Act*—would prohibit the deportation of Veterans who are not violent offenders, give legal permanent residents a path to citizenship through military service and strengthen VA healthcare services for Veterans.