



Duckworth urges VA Secretary to Cover Costs of COVID-19 Testing and Treatment for Veterans

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– Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today wrote to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie requesting that VA act swiftly to cover the costs of COVID-19 treatment under the VA’s Foreign Medical Program (FMP) for Veterans living and travelling abroad. While FMP benefits are currently limited to services that are medically necessary to treat a service-connected disability or condition, the recently enacted bipartisan COVID-19 relief bill provides an additional \$2.1 billion to VA to prevent, prepare for and respond to COVID-19 domestically and internationally. U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) joined Duckworth in sending this letter.

In part, the Senators wrote: **“Currently, FMP benefits are limited to services that are medically necessary to treat a service-connected disability or for a condition associated with and held to be aggravating a service-connected disability. Of the 197 countries recognized by the United Nations, all but 10 of them have reported outbreaks of COVID-19. The VA must be prepared to respond to Veterans abroad that require treatment for COVID-19, regardless of service-connection.”**