

# **Duckworth, Underwood Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Reduce Veterans' Health Care Costs and Protect Their Access to Health Care During COVID19 Pan**

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WASHINGTON, DC] – Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), U.S. Representative Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14), U.S. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Jon Tester (D-MT) today introduced bipartisan legislation to reduce health care costs and ensure parity for Veterans impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. The No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act would make sure that Veterans who receive health care from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) are not liable for out-of-pocket costs for qualifying COVID19 preventive services. U.S. Representatives Julia Brownley (D-CA-26), Lee Zeldin (R-NY-01) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01) also helped introduce the legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“All Americans deserve access to the best healthcare possible—especially those who’ve sacrificed to defend our nation—and that healthcare includes the eventual COVID-19 vaccine and preventive services related to the virus,” Duckworth said. “I’m proud to introduce this common-sense bipartisan legislation today with Congresswoman Underwood, Senator Collins and Senator Tester to make sure Veterans don’t have to pay more for vaccines or preventive services related to COVID-19 than other insured Americans.”

"Our nation's heroes have sacrificed so much to protect our country, and we must honor their service by making sure they have the care they've earned when they come home. During this critical time, it's more important than ever that we do not leave our veterans behind," said Underwood. "I'm introducing the *No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans*

*Act with Senator Duckworth to ensure that veterans can access coronavirus preventive services without financial barriers.”*

“Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our nation, and we owe it to them to provide the health care they have earned through their service, particularly during the current public health crisis,” said Collins. “The tragic outbreaks of COVID-19 that have recently occurred at veterans homes underscore the importance of ensuring that veterans have access to preventive COVID-19 care. Our bipartisan bill will help protect veterans’ health by ensuring that co-pays for preventive care like an eventual COVID-19 vaccine do not pose a barrier to our veterans.”

“During this unprecedented time, ensuring our vulnerable veteran population has access to the health care resources and support they need must be a top priority,” said Ranking Member Tester. “That’s why it’s critically important that we work together to ensure our nation’s heroes will have access to a COVID-19 vaccine once it becomes available to the public. Our bipartisan bill will close current loopholes in the system and help ensure that folks receiving care at VA facilities across the country won’t have to pay for life-saving services out-of-pocket.”

A one-pager of the *No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act* can be found [here](#).

In March, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which waived copays for qualifying items, services, or immunizations intended to prevent or mitigate COVID19—including an eventual vaccine—for Medicare beneficiaries and privately insured individuals. However, the *CARES Act* did not extend these protections to Veterans receiving VHA care. The *No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act* corrects this loophole to ensure that Veterans are equally protected.

In addition to the *No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act*, Duckworth, Underwood and Collins have [introduced](#) the *Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act*. Under current law, Veterans receiving care through the Department of Veterans Affairs are required to make copayments for preventive services and immunizations, which are covered without cost sharing by nearly all private insurance companies due to requirements under the Affordable Care Act. The Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act would ensure parity by removing copay requirements for preventive services and medications recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Health Resources & Services Administration.

The *No Coronavirus Copays for Veterans Act* is endorsed by American Veterans (AMVETS) and the Service Women’s Action Network (SWAN).

