



THE  
INDEPENDENCE  
FUND

May 16, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
U.S. Senate Majority Leader  
S-231, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer,

Over 11 years, The Independence Fund has provided more than \$50 million of mobility equipment and support services to our nation's most catastrophically disabled Veterans and their Caregivers, families, and children. But despite those successes, we've discovered two unshakeable facts: first, the VA health care system repeatedly fails to provide optimum care to our nation's Veterans, therefore, our Veterans need much greater choice in where they receive that care. Second, it is fundamentally unfair to exclude pre-9/11 Veterans' Caregivers from the full spectrum of benefits provided to post 9/11 Veterans.

Given those two conclusions, **The Independence Fund is proud to endorse the HR 5674, the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018, (VA MISSION Act), calls for its earliest consideration by the Senate as soon as it is transmitted by the House, and requests your individual and party caucus' support for this crucial legislation.**


We are especially encouraged by the MISSION Act's consolidation of VA's Community Care Program and provisions for giving Veterans mandatory access to community care when VA facilities are unable to meet basic access and quality standards.

Further, we strongly support expanding the VA's Caregiver program to all generations of catastrophically disabled veterans. Excluding pre-9/11 Veterans from the Caregiver program is patently unfair, and the MISSION Act will rectify this injustice.

Finally, we urge you to see the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) provisions for what they are, but more importantly for what they are not. This is not some version of VA BRAC, but an opportunity – repeatedly encouraged by multiple Republican and Democratic Administrations – to complete a top to bottom analysis of how VA facilities and infrastructure must be modernized. The revised provisions provide significant Veteran stakeholder involvement and increase transparency during the review.

There is not a single Veteran Service Organization of which we know that is opposed to this legislation. This bill provides the last, best hope in this Congress for reforming and expanding VA health care, extending Caregiver benefits to all eras of military service, and optimizing VA's infrastructure to best serve Veterans. We urge you to pass this legislation at the earliest opportunity.

Very Respectfully,



Bob Carey  
CAPT, USN (Ret)

Director, Policy & Advocacy