

Statement on Signing the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act

November 30, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 2116, the “Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act.” This comprehensive bill will improve a broad array of benefits and services for those to whom we owe our freedoms—our Nation’s veterans.

This bill is especially significant for its approach in the provision of enhanced extended-care services to veterans. It firmly establishes that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) should accord the highest priority for nursing home care to the most severely disabled veterans and those needing care for service-connected disabilities. It will also ensure that veterans enrolled in the VA health care system receive noninstitutional, extended-care services, including geriatric evaluations and adult day health care.

The bill also expands opportunities for military retirees to utilize VA health care services, at Department of Defense (DoD) expense and in accordance with an agreement to be developed by DoD and VA. The DoD and VA will ensure this agreement allows for the provision of high-quality managed care and increased choice, in the most cost-effective manner for the Federal Government.

This bill includes many other important health care provisions. For example, H.R. 2116:

- Expands veterans’ eligibility for reimbursement of emergency care costs when VA

or other Federal health care facilities are not accessible.

- Extends and expands VA’s authority to provide health care services to victims of sexual trauma.
- Makes more active duty personnel eligible for VA substance dependency treatment.
- Authorizes VA to update the schedule of copayments charged for certain health care benefits to generate additional program funds.

I am also pleased that the bill will make it easier for surviving spouses of disabled former prisoners of war to qualify for survivor benefits; expand certain education benefit entitlements; extend VA’s authority to guarantee home loans for members of the Selected Reserve; and both extend and enhance programs for homeless veterans.

These are but the high points of a comprehensive bill that will enhance many benefits and services our veterans and their families justly deserve. I thank all who were involved in its passage.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
November 30, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 2116, approved November 30, was assigned Public Law No. 106–117.

Statement on Signing the Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 1999

November 30, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 2280, the “Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 1999,” which provides a 2.4 percent cost-of-living adjustment in benefits for service-disabled veterans and their surviving spouses and children. It provides for increased rates in payments of service-connected disability compensation to veterans who suffer

from service-related disabilities and in payments of dependency and indemnity compensation for the surviving spouses and children of service members and veterans whose deaths are service-related. The increased benefit rates will take effect on December 1, 1999. This legislation,