

(v) provides any recommendations for legislation, administrative action, or other actions that the Advisory Committee determines appropriate.

(B) **REPORTS TO CONGRESS AND FEDERAL AGENCIES.**—

(i) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the receipt of a report required under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a copy of such report and any comments and recommendations of the Secretary concerning such report that the Secretary determines appropriate.

(ii) **AVAILABILITY TO THE PUBLIC.**—The Secretary shall publish on a publicly accessible website of the Department such report and such comments and recommendations as may have been submitted along with such report.

(iii) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—In this subparagraph, the term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(I) the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives;

(II) the Special Committee on Aging of the Senate; and

(III) the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives.

(g) **ADVISORY COMMITTEE PERSONNEL AND RESOURCE MATTERS.**—

(1) **COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.**—(A) A member of the Advisory Committee who is not an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall not be compensated for the performance of the duties of the Advisory Committee.

(B) Members of the Advisory Committee who are officers or employees of the Federal Government shall not receive additional compensation beyond travel for the performance of the duties of the Advisory Committee.

(2) **TRAVEL EXPENSES.**—A member of the Advisory Committee shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Advisory Committee.

(3) **RESOURCES.**—The Secretary shall ensure that such personnel, funding, and other resources are made available to the Advisory Committee as the Secretary determines appropriate to carry out the duties of the Advisory Committee.

(4) **INFORMATION.**—The Secretary shall furnish to the Advisory Committee such information as the Advisory Committee may request from the Secretary, subject to applicable provisions of law.

(h) **TERMINATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**—The Advisory Committee shall terminate on the date that is 10 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The bill (S. 1383), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### GOLD STAR AND SURVIVING SPOUSE CAREER SERVICES ACT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous

consent that the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 1204 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1204) to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain spouses eligible for services under the disabled veterans’ outreach program, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1204) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1204

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Gold Star and Surviving Spouse Career Services Act”.

#### SEC. 2. ELIGIBILITY OF SPOUSES FOR SERVICES UNDER THE DISABLED VETERANS’ OUTREACH PROGRAM.

Section 4103A of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by inserting “and eligible persons” after “eligible veterans”; and

(ii) in subparagraph (C), by inserting “, and eligible persons,” after “Other eligible veterans”;

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting “and eligible persons” after “veterans” each place it appears; and

(C) in paragraph (3)—

(i) by inserting “or eligible person” after “veteran” each place it appears; and

(ii) by inserting “or eligible person’s” after “veteran’s”;

(2) in subsection (d)(1)—

(A) by inserting “and eligible persons” after “eligible veterans” each place it appears; and

(B) by striking “non-veteran-related”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(e) **ELIGIBLE PERSON DEFINED.**—In this section, the term ‘eligible person’ means—

“(1) any spouse described in section 4101(5) of this title; or

“(2) the spouse of any person who died while a member of the Armed Forces.”.

#### FOCUSED ASSISTANCE AND SKILLS TRAINING FOR VETERANS’ EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITION SUCCESS ACT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4446 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4446) to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the conditions under which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is required to redevelop the individualized vocational rehabilitation plan for a veteran, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 4446) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### VA BUDGET SHORTFALL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1823 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1823) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Comptroller General of the United States to report on certain funding shortfalls in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. THUNE. I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 1823) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

#### VETPAC ACT OF 2025

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 279, S. 787.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 787) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a commission to review operations at the Veterans Health Administration and submit to Congress reports with respect to that review, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic, as follows:

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the “VetPAC Act of 2025”.

**SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION POLICY ADVISORY COMMISSION.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Chapter 1 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

**“§ 120. Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission**

“(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established the Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission (in this section referred to as the ‘Commission’).

“(b) **MEMBERSHIP.**—

“(1) **COMPOSITION.**—The Commission shall be composed of 17 members appointed by the Comptroller General of the United States, of which not fewer than 2 shall be veterans.

“(2) **QUALIFICATIONS.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—An individual is eligible for appointment to the Commission under paragraph (1) if the individual has significant expertise in operating or advising large medical systems, including expertise in quality of care, staffing issues, information technology, artificial intelligence in health care, medical supply chains, procurement of medical supplies, medical facility construction or leasing, medical facility architecture or engineering, medical research, and managed care plans and networks.

“(B) **EXPERIENCE OF MEMBERS.**—In appointing members under paragraph (1), the Comptroller General shall select individuals from backgrounds that reflect the broad diversity of health care received by veterans, including non-profit health systems, public and private health systems, care furnished by the Veterans Health Administration, and care furnished by the Department of Defense.

“(3) **ETHICAL DISCLOSURE.**—A member of the Commission shall be considered an employee of Congress whose compensation is disbursed by the Secretary of the Senate for purposes of applying subchapter I of chapter 131 of title 5, United States Code, except that a member of the Commission is required to file public financial disclosure reports without regard to their number of days of service or rate of pay.

“(c) **PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.**—

“(1) **TERMS.**—A member of the Commission shall be appointed under subsection (b)(1) for a term of 5 years, except that the Comptroller General shall designate staggered terms for the members first appointed.

“(2) **VACANCIES.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—A vacancy on the Commission shall be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made and shall be subject to any conditions that applied with respect to the original appointment.

“(B) **FILLING UNEXPIRED TERM.**—An individual chosen to fill a vacancy shall be appointed for the unexpired term of the member replaced.

“(3) **EXPIRATION OF TERMS.**—The term of any member shall not expire before the date on which the member’s successor takes office.

“(d) **MEETINGS.**—

“(1) **FREQUENCY.**—The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chairman, but not less frequently than once per year.

“(2) **QUORUM.**—A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number of members may hold meetings.

“(e) **CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN.**—The Comptroller General shall designate one member of the Commission as Chairman and one member of the Commission as Vice Chairman, at the time of appointment of such member and for the term of appointment of such member, except that in the case of vacancy of the Chairmanship or Vice Chairmanship, the Comptroller General may designate another member for the remainder of that member’s term.

“(f) **DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.**—

“(1) **REVIEW.**—The Commission shall—

“(A) review operations at the Veterans Health Administration; and

“(B) prepare reports for Congress based on such review, including recommendations to Congress.

“(2) **TOPICS TO BE REVIEWED.**—In conducting a review under paragraph (1)(A), the Commission shall include periodic reviews of the following, taking into consideration other independent assessments in selecting topics to limit duplicative efforts:

“(A) Information technology infrastructure at medical facilities of the Department, including with respect to electronic health record systems.

“(B) Referrals to care at facilities of the Department and under the Veterans Community Care Program under section 1703 of this title, and factors impacting those referrals.

“(C) Access and wait times at medical facilities of the Department and under the Veterans Community Care Program, including both primary and specialty care, and factors impacting those wait times.

“(D) The quality of health care furnished by the Department and through the Veterans Community Care Program.

“(E) Workforce issues, including workforce performance, recruitment, and retention factors.

“(F) Patient satisfaction and customer service at medical facilities of the Department and through the Veterans Community Care Program.

“(G) The training of health care providers and the standards of care at facilities of the Department and in the Veterans Community Care Program.

“(H) The long-term budgetary outlook of the Veterans Health Administration, as well as key components driving budgetary changes over time.

“(I) Procurement of supplies at medical facilities of the Department.

“(J) The research program of the Department, including both internal and external research.

“(K) Hospital construction, leasing, and capital requirements.

“(L) The interaction of care under the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.), the Medicaid program under title XIX of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.), the TRICARE program under chapter 55 of title 10, and commercial health care plans with care furnished by the Veterans Health Administration.

“(3) **USE OF EXISTING DATA.**—In carrying out the requirements of this subsection, the Commission, to the extent practicable, shall use existing data that has been compiled by the Department, compiled for the Department, or purchased by the Department, including—

“(A) data described in subsection (c)(1) of section 1704A of this title; and

“(B) the results of the independent assessments conducted under such section.

“(4) **ISSUES REGARDING VETERAN HEALTH CARE DELIVERY GENERALLY.**—In carrying out the requirements of this subsection, the Commission shall review the effect of policies under this title on the delivery of health care services to veterans and assess the implications of changes in health care delivery for veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary.

“(5) **TRANSMITTAL OF CERTAIN REPORTS.**—If the Secretary or the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs submits to Congress (or a committee of Congress) a report that is required by law and that relates to policies for health care furnished under the laws administered by the Secretary, the Secretary shall transmit a copy of that report to the Commission.

“(6) **CONSULTATION AND ADDITIONAL REVIEWS AND STUDIES.**—

“(A) **CONSULTATION.**—In carrying out the requirements of this subsection, the Commission shall consult periodically with the chairmen and ranking members of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Vet-

erans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives regarding the agenda of the Commission and progress towards achieving that agenda.

“(B) **ADDITIONAL REVIEWS AND REPORTS.**—The Commission may conduct additional reviews, and may submit additional reports to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives, from time to time on such topics relating to the activities of the Commission as may be requested by the Chairman and members and as the Commission determines appropriate.

“(C) **SPECIAL STUDIES.**—The Commission may conduct special studies requested by the chairman or ranking member of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate or the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and as the Commission determines appropriate.

“(7) **COORDINATION.**—In carrying out reviews, preparing reports, and conducting studies under this section, the Commission shall, to the extent practicable, coordinate with the Inspector General of the Department to ensure the work of the Commission does not interfere with investigations or remediations underway by the Inspector General.

“(8) **BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS.**—Before making any recommendations to Congress, the Commission shall examine the budget consequences of such recommendations, directly or through consultation with appropriate expert entities.

“(9) **REPORT.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—By not later than March 15 of each year, the Commission shall submit to Congress a report containing the results and recommendations from the review conducted under paragraph (1).

“(B) **INCLUSION OF RECOMMENDATIONS.**—A recommendation may be included in a report under subparagraph (A) if a simple majority of the members of the Commission vote to include the recommendation in the report.

“(g) **POWERS OF COMMISSION.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Commission may—

“(A) employ and fix the compensation of an Executive Director (at a rate of pay not greater than that provided for level III of the Executive Schedule under section 5314 of title 5) and such other personnel as may be necessary to carry out the duties of the Commission, without regard to the provisions of title 5 governing appointments in the competitive service;

“(B) seek such assistance and support as may be required in the performance of its duties from appropriate departments and agencies of the United States or departments or agencies of a State;

“(C) enter into contracts or make other arrangements, as may be necessary for the conduct of the work of the Commission (without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 6101));

“(D) make advance, progress, and other payments that relate to the work of the Commission;

“(E) provide transportation and subsistence for individuals serving the Commission without compensation; and

“(F) prescribe such rules and regulations as the Commission determines necessary with respect to the internal organization and operation of the Commission.

“(2) **DATA COLLECTION.**—In order to carry out its functions, the Commission shall—

“(A) utilize existing information, both published and unpublished, if possible, collected and assessed either by its own staff or under other arrangements made in accordance with this section;

“(B) carry out, or award grants or contracts for, original research and experimentation, if existing information is inadequate; and

“(C) adopt procedures allowing any interested party to submit information for use by the Commission in making reports and recommendations.

“(3) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may secure directly from any relevant department or agency of the United States health care information the Chairman determines would be helpful to enable the Commission to carry out this section.

“(B) TIMING.—Upon request of the Chairman, the head of a department or agency of the United States shall furnish information requested under subparagraph (A) to the Commission on an agreed upon schedule or not later than 180 days after the date of the request.

“(h) COMPENSATION.—

“(1) MEMBERS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—While conducting the business of the Commission (including travel time), a member of the Commission shall be entitled to compensation at the per diem equivalent of the rate provided for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5.

“(B) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—While conducting the business of the Commission away from home and the regular place of business of the member, a member may be allowed travel expenses, as authorized by the Chairman.

“(2) PHYSICIAN COMPARABILITY ALLOWANCE FOR PERSONNEL.—The Commission may provide a physician comparability allowance to physicians serving as personnel of the Commission in the same manner as physicians of the Federal Government may be provided such an allowance by an agency under section 5948 of title 5, and for such purpose, subsection (i) of such section shall apply to the Commission in the same manner as it applies to the Tennessee Valley Authority.

“(3) TREATMENT OF PERSONNEL.—For purposes of pay (other than pay of members of the Commission) and employment benefits, rights, and privileges, all personnel of the Commission shall be treated as if they were employees of the United States Senate.

“(i) DETAIL OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.—An employee of the Federal Government may be detailed to the Commission without reimbursement and without interruption or loss of civil service status or privileges.

“(j) ACCESS OF CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT AGENCIES TO INFORMATION.—The Commission shall provide to the Comptroller General, the Congressional Research Service, and the Congressional Budget Office unrestricted access to all deliberations, records, and nonproprietary data of the Commission not later than 30 days after such access is requested.

“(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

“(1) REQUEST FOR APPROPRIATIONS.—The Commission shall submit requests for appropriations in the same manner as the Comptroller General submits requests for appropriations, but amounts appropriated for the Commission shall be separate from amounts appropriated for the Comptroller General.

“(2) AUTHORIZATION.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 119 the following new item:

“120. Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission.”.

(c) INITIAL APPOINTMENT.—Not later than 280 days after the date on which amounts are first appropriated to the Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission established under section 120 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), the Comptroller General of the United States shall make initial appointments of members to the Commission under subsection (b)(1) of such section.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that the Moran amendment to the substitute, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to; that the committee-reported substitute amend-

ment, as amended, be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 4142) was agreed to as follows:

On page 27, strike lines 8 through 17 and insert the following:

“(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—The Commission shall submit requests for appropriations in the same manner as the Comptroller General submits requests for appropriations, but amounts appropriated for the Commission shall be separate from amounts appropriated for the Comptroller General.”.

The committee-reported amendment, in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 787), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 787

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “VetPAC Act of 2025”.

#### SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION POLICY ADVISORY COMMISSION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

##### “§ 120. Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission

“(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission (in this section referred to as the ‘Commission’).

“(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

“(1) COMPOSITION.—The Commission shall be composed of 17 members appointed by the Comptroller General of the United States, of which not fewer than 2 shall be veterans.

“(2) QUALIFICATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—An individual is eligible for appointment to the Commission under paragraph (1) if the individual has significant expertise in operating or advising large medical systems, including expertise in quality of care, staffing issues, information technology, artificial intelligence in health care, medical supply chains, procurement of medical supplies, medical facility construction or leasing, medical facility architecture or engineering, medical research, and managed care plans and networks.

“(B) EXPERIENCE OF MEMBERS.—In appointing members under paragraph (1), the Comptroller General shall select individuals from backgrounds that reflect the broad diversity of health care received by veterans, including nonprofit health systems, public and private health systems, care furnished by the Veterans Health Administration, and care furnished by the Department of Defense.

“(3) ETHICAL DISCLOSURE.—A member of the Commission shall be considered an employee of Congress whose compensation is disbursed by the Secretary of the Senate for purposes of applying subchapter I of chapter 131 of title 5, United States Code, except that a member of the Commission is required to file public financial disclosure reports without regard to their number of days of service or rate of pay.

“(c) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—

“(1) TERMS.—A member of the Commission shall be appointed under subsection (b)(1) for

a term of 5 years, except that the Comptroller General shall designate staggered terms for the members first appointed.

“(2) VACANCIES.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—A vacancy on the Commission shall be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made and shall be subject to any conditions that applied with respect to the original appointment.

“(B) FILLING UNEXPIRED TERM.—An individual chosen to fill a vacancy shall be appointed for the unexpired term of the member replaced.

“(3) EXPIRATION OF TERMS.—The term of any member shall not expire before the date on which the member's successor takes office.

“(d) MEETINGS.—

“(1) FREQUENCY.—The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chairman, but not less frequently than once per year.

“(2) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number of members may hold meetings.

“(e) CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN.—The Comptroller General shall designate one member of the Commission as Chairman and one member of the Commission as Vice Chairman, at the time of appointment of such member and for the term of appointment of such member, except that in the case of vacancy of the Chairmanship or Vice Chairmanship, the Comptroller General may designate another member for the remainder of that member's term.

“(f) DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION.—

“(1) REVIEW.—The Commission shall—

“(A) review operations at the Veterans Health Administration; and

“(B) prepare reports for Congress based on such review, including recommendations to Congress.

“(2) TOPICS TO BE REVIEWED.—In conducting a review under paragraph (1)(A), the Commission shall include periodic reviews of the following, taking into consideration other independent assessments in selecting topics to limit duplicative efforts:

“(A) Information technology infrastructure at medical facilities of the Department, including with respect to electronic health record systems.

“(B) Referrals to care at facilities of the Department and under the Veterans Community Care Program under section 1703 of this title, and factors impacting those referrals.

“(C) Access and wait times at medical facilities of the Department and under the Veterans Community Care Program, including both primary and specialty care, and factors impacting those wait times.

“(D) The quality of health care furnished by the Department and through the Veterans Community Care Program.

“(E) Workforce issues, including workforce performance, recruitment, and retention factors.

“(F) Patient satisfaction and customer service at medical facilities of the Department and through the Veterans Community Care Program.

“(G) The training of health care providers and the standards of care at facilities of the Department and in the Veterans Community Care Program.

“(H) The long-term budgetary outlook of the Veterans Health Administration, as well as key components driving budgetary changes over time.

“(I) Procurement of supplies at medical facilities of the Department.

“(J) The research program of the Department, including both internal and external research.

“(K) Hospital construction, leasing, and capital requirements.

“(L) The interaction of care under the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.), the Medicaid program under title XIX of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.), the TRICARE program under chapter 55 of title 10, and commercial health care plans with care furnished by the Veterans Health Administration.

“(3) USE OF EXISTING DATA.—In carrying out the requirements of this subsection, the Commission, to the extent practicable, shall use existing data that has been compiled by the Department, compiled for the Department, or purchased by the Department, including—

“(A) data described in subsection (c)(1) of section 1704A of this title; and

“(B) the results of the independent assessments conducted under such section.

“(4) ISSUES REGARDING VETERAN HEALTH CARE DELIVERY GENERALLY.—In carrying out the requirements of this subsection, the Commission shall review the effect of policies under this title on the delivery of health care services to veterans and assess the implications of changes in health care delivery for veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary.

“(5) TRANSMITTAL OF CERTAIN REPORTS.—If the Secretary or the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs submits to Congress (or a committee of Congress) a report that is required by law and that relates to policies for health care furnished under the laws administered by the Secretary, the Secretary shall transmit a copy of that report to the Commission.

“(6) CONSULTATION AND ADDITIONAL REVIEWS AND STUDIES.—

“(A) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out the requirements of this subsection, the Commission shall consult periodically with the chairmen and ranking members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives regarding the agenda of the Commission and progress towards achieving that agenda.

“(B) ADDITIONAL REVIEWS AND REPORTS.—The Commission may conduct additional reviews, and may submit additional reports to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives, from time to time on such topics relating to the activities of the Commission as may be requested by the Chairman and members and as the Commission determines appropriate.

“(C) SPECIAL STUDIES.—The Commission may conduct special studies requested by the chairman or ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate or the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and as the Commission determines appropriate.

“(7) COORDINATION.—In carrying out reviews, preparing reports, and conducting studies under this section, the Commission shall, to the extent practicable, coordinate with the Inspector General of the Department to ensure the work of the Commission does not interfere with investigations or remediations underway by the Inspector General.

“(8) BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS.—Before making any recommendations to Congress, the Commission shall examine the budget consequences of such recommendations, directly or through consultation with appropriate expert entities.

“(9) REPORT.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—By not later than March 15 of each year, the Commission shall submit to Congress a report containing the results and recommendations from the review conducted under paragraph (1).

“(B) INCLUSION OF RECOMMENDATIONS.—A recommendation may be included in a report under subparagraph (A) if a simple majority of the members of the Commission vote to include the recommendation in the report.

“(g) POWERS OF COMMISSION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may—

“(A) employ and fix the compensation of an Executive Director (at a rate of pay not greater than that provided for level III of the Executive Schedule under section 5314 of title 5) and such other personnel as may be necessary to carry out the duties of the Commission, without regard to the provisions of title 5 governing appointments in the competitive service;

“(B) seek such assistance and support as may be required in the performance of its duties from appropriate departments and agencies of the United States or departments or agencies of a State;

“(C) enter into contracts or make other arrangements, as may be necessary for the conduct of the work of the Commission (without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 6101));

“(D) make advance, progress, and other payments that relate to the work of the Commission;

“(E) provide transportation and subsistence for individuals serving the Commission without compensation; and

“(F) prescribe such rules and regulations as the Commission determines necessary with respect to the internal organization and operation of the Commission.

“(2) DATA COLLECTION.—In order to carry out its functions, the Commission shall—

“(A) utilize existing information, both published and unpublished, if possible, collected and assessed either by its own staff or under other arrangements made in accordance with this section;

“(B) carry out, or award grants or contracts for, original research and experimentation, if existing information is inadequate; and

“(C) adopt procedures allowing any interested party to submit information for use by the Commission in making reports and recommendations.

“(3) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Commission may secure directly from any relevant department or agency of the United States health care information the Chairman determines would be helpful to enable the Commission to carry out this section.

“(B) TIMING.—Upon request of the Chairman, the head of a department or agency of the United States shall furnish information requested under subparagraph (A) to the Commission on an agreed upon schedule or not later than 180 days after the date of the request.

“(h) COMPENSATION.—

“(1) MEMBERS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—While conducting the business of the Commission (including travel time), a member of the Commission shall be entitled to compensation at the per diem equivalent of the rate provided for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5.

“(B) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—While conducting the business of the Commission away from home and the regular place of business of the member, a member may be allowed travel expenses, as authorized by the Chairman.

“(2) PHYSICIAN COMPARABILITY ALLOWANCE FOR PERSONNEL.—The Commission may provide a physician comparability allowance to physicians serving as personnel of the Commission in the same manner as physicians of the Federal Government may be provided such an allowance by an agency under section 5948 of title 5, and for such purpose, sub-

section (i) of such section shall apply to the Commission in the same manner as it applies to the Tennessee Valley Authority.

“(3) TREATMENT OF PERSONNEL.—For purposes of pay (other than pay of members of the Commission) and employment benefits, rights, and privileges, all personnel of the Commission shall be treated as if they were employees of the United States Senate.

“(i) DETAIL OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.—An employee of the Federal Government may be detailed to the Commission without reimbursement and without interruption or loss of civil service status or privileges.

“(j) ACCESS OF CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT AGENCIES TO INFORMATION.—The Commission shall provide to the Comptroller General, the Congressional Research Service, and the Congressional Budget Office unrestricted access to all deliberations, records, and nonproprietary data of the Commission not later than 30 days after such access is requested.

“(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—The Commission shall submit requests for appropriations in the same manner as the Comptroller General submits requests for appropriations, but amounts appropriated for the Commission shall be separate from amounts appropriated for the Comptroller General.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 119 the following new item:

“120. Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission.”.

(c) INITIAL APPOINTMENT.—Not later than 280 days after the date on which amounts are first appropriated to the Veterans Health Administration Policy Advisory Commission established under section 120 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), the Comptroller General of the United States shall make initial appointments of members to the Commission under subsection (b)(1) of such section.

## IMPROVING VETERAN ACCESS TO CARE ACT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration Calendar No. 272, S. 607.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 607) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish an integrated project team to improve the process for scheduling appointments for health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic, as follows:

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

*This Act may be cited as the “Improving Veteran Access to Care Act”.*

### SEC. 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF AND REPORT ON EFFORTS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO IMPROVE HEALTH CARE APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a plan to improve the process for scheduling appointments for health care from the Department of Veterans