

## LARSON URGES PRESIDENT, VA SECRETARY TO CONSIDER 21st CENTURY VETERANS EQUITABLE TREATMENT ACT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 12, 2003

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WASHINGTON, D.C.- In letters sent Wednesday, U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) called on President Bush and Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi to consider his legislation, H.R. 890, the 21st Century Veterans Equitable Treatment Act (VET-21) as a means of addressing glaring inequities in America's veterans healthcare system. These inequities were recently outlined in the final report from the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans, found at: <http://www.presidentshealthcare.org> . A number of the recommendations made by the Task Force are specifically addressed by Larson's legislation.

His bill would guarantee adequate health care for the nation's veterans by allowing them to receive the same service they would qualify for through the VA at non-VA medical facilities, should the VA be unable to meet its stated performance goals. Larson originally introduced the legislation in 2002, during the 107th Congress.

The letters to both the President and Principi are nearly identical. The text of the letter to the President is below:  
June 11, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Bush:

I am writing today to bring to your attention H.R. 890, the 21st Century Veterans Equitable Treatment Act (VET-21). I have introduced this bill to ensure adequate health care access by setting standards for appointments using the VA's established performance goals. If the VA is incapable of meeting these standards, this legislation would allow service or treatment at a non-VA medical facility for which a veteran would have otherwise qualified within the VA system.

May I commend you for your actions in creating the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans. As you know, the recently released final report by the Task Force included a number of recommendations. My legislation specifically addresses Recommendation 5.2:

VA facilities should be held accountable to meet the VA's access standards for enrolled Priority Groups 1 through 7 (new). In instances where an appointment cannot be offered within the access standard, VA should be required to arrange for care with a non-VA provider, unless the veteran elects to wait for an available appointment within VA.

As you consider a number of critical veterans issues, I wanted to make you aware of this inequity in the VA health care system and the legislation I first introduced in the 107th Congress to address it. For your review, I have enclosed a copy of the bill, a summary, and letters of support from a number of veterans organizations.

Again, thank you for taking the initiative to create this Task Force and looking into the issues that are important to our veterans. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues in Congress to address this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

/s

JOHN B. LARSON  
Member of Congress

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Congressman Larson is a Member of the House Armed Services Committee  
or a summary of H.R. 890, please visit: <http://www.house.gov/larson/vet21.htm>  
Links to both letters can be found at: <http://www.house.gov/larson/vet21principi.pdf> &  
<http://www.house.gov/larson/vet21bush.pdf>