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Lobbying Report

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SE-002: 'Veteran's Prescription Access'

Overview

Sen. Massengale's bill in regards to veteran's prescription access should be urgently seen at this session. This bill tackles the problem within the state of Oklahoma surrounding the rising prices and lack of coverage of pharmaceuticals in veteran's insurance plans. The intent of this bill is necessary in this state, but it must be sound in its writing as well. Ensuring this should be determined by the legislature. Massengale said "it provides for protections of the pharmacies against fraud and also requires that the pharmacy and the V.A.....agree on prices near or at average."

Need for veterans

While many states combat veteran suicide through gun locks and camo alerts, this bill would help cut this number at the root cause. Healthcare for veterans comes in various different forms, and veterans are often issued pharmaceuticals for a variety of reasons. On average, 6.1 million veterans per year use Veteran's Affairs health care benefits. This is drastically more than any benefit or service offered by the V.A., besides compensation. Veterans are prescribed approximately 33 pharmaceuticals per year. This bill is also needed for veterans because of their lack of ability to get a job in the labor force. 52.2% of vets struggle to get jobs because of the lack of onboarding by the military and PTSD.

Pros

This in theory would help ease some of the demand on the V.A. through budgetary restrictions. Many veterans often use veteran's health insurance programs to help fund their medications, but not every pharmacy in the state is required to accept said insurance plans.

This legislation would require that unknown sum to accept veteran specific health insurance plans. Noah Zachary, a house zero-star delegate from Oklahoma Baptist, believes “this bill is just another way we can show our appreciation for those that sacrificed.” Many might worry about the funding, but Messengal has confirmed that “no new tax is implemented....it will all be funded by existing funding...and the compliancy will go into the pot, and that once it is started up it will be negligible.”

Cons

This bill would give the government more overreach into businesses by requiring them to take certain plans. This strips the pharmacies the right to set prices. This bill could also kill small pharmacies. When missing the incoming revenue, businesses will have to raise prices on others to regenerate it. While plans such as the VA get billed for the remainder of the cost, the VA is historically known for not covering the rest of the cost. This exact reason is why some pharmacies are denying these plans. Not to target veterans themselves, but they are fighting to get the money they need from the system.

Conclusion

This debate between pharmacies' rights and veterans benefits should be left up to the legislature to determine the need. This bill should be seen this session to help veterans pay less at the pharmacy or to nudge the V.A. to help with payment to pharmacies.

Sources

- <https://www.datahub.va.gov/stories/s/Use-of-VA-Benefits-and-Services-2023-Part-1-/59yt-v847/>
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