

PRELIMINARY STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

CARRIER:

Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, statement not yet issued

SUBSEQUENT REFERRAL TO: None

Action:

Vote:

Yeas:

Nays:

Exc.:

Prepared By: Cheyenne Ross, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 3/31, 4/7

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Urges Congress to improve delivery of care to rural veterans.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Ongoing scandals involving federal Veterans Administration generally
- Bureaucracy itself a barrier to care
- Significant delays at Phoenix, Arizona VA medical facility
- The 40 mile rule preventing rural veterans from seeking care elsewhere
- Overmedication and overreliance on opiates for pain management

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: A high percentage of veterans live in rural areas. The Veterans Health Administration's Office of Rural Health was created in 2007 to better serve them, but improvements have been slow and inconsistent, as the Veterans Administration deals with ongoing scandals.

Senate Joint Memorial 11 urges Congress to get behind the mission of the Office of Rural Health: accelerate the pace of improvements, eliminate inefficiencies and barriers, and make care accessible to rural veterans.