

# VFW Applauds VA for Clearing Way to Timely Care

## VFW-endorsed Elizabeth Dole Act instrumental in the ‘best medical interest’ policy change, effective immediately

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**WASHINGTON** – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) applauded the Department of Veterans Affairs following its [announcement](#) of eliminating the requirement of secondary approval to access community care when a VA clinician determines it is in the “best medical interest” of the veterans, effective immediately.

“Under the old way of doing things, veterans would pay the price for delayed or denied referrals for care in the community, even when VA’s own doctors knew best,” said VFW National Commander Al Lipphardt. “This is exactly the pressure-relief valve that veterans and their providers expect in a patient-centric care system. The VFW fought hard for this to stay in the Dole Act, and we commend Secretary Collins for his expedient implementation of the law, placing veterans first when their VA doctors know that community care is the right call.”

Before yesterday’s announcement, veterans and their VA providers needed another physician to approve and finalize a community care referral, presenting an additional hurdle with an uncertain outcome. The VFW testified before Congress multiple times on this issue, sharing stories from veterans who were arbitrarily denied care that should have been granted by the 2019 MISSION Act.

“The VFW has always advocated for delivering timely care to veterans through all means available to VA, including its community partners,” said VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci. “We have gone to the mat for what is in the best medical interest of the veteran – allowing them to make those decisions with the doctor who is treating them, without having to get the ‘OK’ from an outsider.”

With the passing of the VFW-backed [Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans](#)

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[Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act](#), secondary approval is no longer required, paving the way for veterans to receive the care they and their providers believe is in their best interest. It also reduces inequities between veterans in urban environments and rural areas where VA medical care is either overwhelmed, not readily available, or inconsistently granted.

But it rarely happened. The VFW aggressively advocated to keep the best medical interest provision in the Dole Act when some in Congress sought to strip it from the bill. The members of the VFW would not stand for it and sent thousands of messages to lawmakers, ensuring its passage.