



THE UNITED STATES SENATE

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COMMITTEE *on* VETERANS' AFFAIRS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Olya Voytovich (Tester) | 202.224.2868  
Angela Lingg (Moran) | 202.228.6519  
Jenni Geurink (Takano) | 202.819.4684  
Samantha Gonzalez (Bost) | 202.225.3527

**BREAKING: Bipartisan Bill Expanding Vaccine Access for  
Vets & Families Signed Into Law**

*All veterans, veteran spouses, caregivers, and CHAMPVA recipients have access  
to VA COVID vaccination services under the SAVE LIVES Act*

(U.S. Senate) – President Joe Biden today signed [bipartisan legislation](#) into law expanding COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to veterans and their families under the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), following efforts from Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committee leaders Chairman Jon Tester (D-Mont.), Ranking Member Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.), and Ranking Member Mike Bost (R-Ill.).

The *Strengthening and Amplifying Vaccination Efforts to Locally Immunize all Veterans and Every Spouse Act (SAVE LIVES Act)* allows VA to provide COVID vaccination services to all veterans, veteran spouses, caregivers, and Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) recipients to the extent that such vaccines are available. The new law also urges the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to adjust VA's vaccine allocation based on this increased eligibility pool, as much as the supply chain allows. This legislation builds upon the *VA VACCINE Act*, legislation led by Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Bost.

**“This new law expands options for where veterans and their families can receive the COVID-19 vaccine, ensuring that every veteran, spouse, and caregiver will have access to the protection they need from VA,”** said Chairman Tester. **“This bipartisan bill follows through on our shared goal of getting more shots into the arms of as many veterans as possible, and I thank Senators Moran, Boozman, Blumenthal, and our House colleagues for helping me in our push to put this pandemic behind us and move our country forward.”**

**“Military service is family service, and that is why the VA and this committee aim to care for both veterans and their families,”** said Ranking Member Moran. **“I am grateful the President acted quickly to sign this legislation into law to make certain the VA has the**

freedom to vaccinate veteran spouses, non-enrolled veterans, caregivers, overseas veterans and others with excess COVID-19 vaccine supply. While the VA will continue to prioritize vaccinating VHA enrolled veterans with its allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine, this legislation will help further protect our veterans and their families.”

“Today, President Biden signed our vital legislation into law, ensuring that VA has the authority to provide COVID-19 vaccines to all veterans, caregivers, and veteran spouses who walk through its doors,” said Chairman Takano. “VA has proven itself as one of our country’s most effective vaccinators, but it’s clear VA needed additional authority to continue leading the effort to get as many shots into arms as possible. I’m grateful that Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Bost, and Ranking Member Moran joined me in quickly passing legislation to make sure that as vaccine supply increases, VA will be able to ramp up its vaccination efforts even more. No veteran should be turned away from getting a vaccine at VA—after today, that doesn’t need to be a concern. I know this is a heavy lift, but the strength of VA’s internal healthcare delivery system and the Department’s successful role in national vaccination efforts make this expansion possible. I look forward to working with VA to implement the *SAVE LIVES Act* successfully when vaccine supply increases.”

“I hope every veteran and their loved ones will get vaccinated against COVID-19,” said Ranking Member Bost. “This bill will give them, their spouses, and their caregivers that chance. I am proud of the work Chairman Takano, Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran and I did to get it across the finish line and am grateful the President signed it into law today. This gets us one step closer to normal and is a light at the end of the tunnel for millions of veterans and their families.”

Veterans Service Organizations applauded the President’s signing of the *SAVE LIVES Act* and highlighted the law’s immense impact on veterans and their families amid the pandemic.

“VVA Applauds the swift passage of the *SAVES LIVES Act*, said **Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) National President John Rowan**. “Vietnam veterans are vulnerable—most of us are in our 70’s, and our health has been compromised due to our military service and exposures to Agent Orange and other toxicants. The vaccine saves lives, and the more people we get vaccinated, the sooner our country will be back to normal.”

“COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on all American including veterans and their families,” said **Veterans of Foreign Wars National Legislative Director Pat Murray**. “The end may be near, but we will not come out of this until everybody possible has vaccinations. Expanding VA’s authority to vaccinate all veterans, caregivers, and spouses will help get us to herd immunity and hopefully eliminate this deadly disease.”

“IAVA strongly supports the *SAVE LIVES Act*, which will expand COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to all veterans, caregivers and spouses at the VA,” said **Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) CEO Jeremy Butler**. “The goal should be to provide access to as many veterans and family members as possible to ensure the safety and health of the veteran community, getting us one step closer to ending this pandemic.”

“MOAA is grateful both the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs recognize the importance of getting veterans, their spouses and caregivers, and eligible CHAMPVA spouses of veterans permanently and totally disabled or those who have died from service-connected disabilities vaccinated as soon as possible,” **said MOAA President and CEO Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret).** “Congress saw the immediate need and galvanized its members to pass and enact the *SAVE LIVES Act* to provide this life-saving COVID-19 vaccine to our veteran community. MOAA is please the legislation prioritizes veterans receiving VA health care and accompanying caregivers for the vaccination services first. We look forward to working with VA and Congress to implement and communicate the vaccination plan to our members and the veteran community.”

“The *SAVE LIVES Act* is a critical step forward for the American people in our work to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, return our veterans to the workplace, and regain cultural normalcy,” **said the Veterans Education Project Legislative Director Donald Franklin.** “This legislation will save veteran lives and protect their families, while promoting veteran employment and education opportunities.”

“The Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) applauds Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Moran for their hard work in getting the *SAVES LIVES Act* passed quickly,” **said NOVA President Kelly Skinner.** “As nurses, we are encouraged that this legislation will open the door to allow all veterans, caregivers and others to receive a vaccine at VA facilities nationwide. We believe this is critical in helping all of us to protect each other and our communities.”

The *SAVE LIVES Act* expands VA’s authority to provide vaccines to:

- Veterans who are not eligible for enrollment in VA’s health care system, including veterans without compensable service-connected disabilities and veterans who have incomes above a certain threshold;
- Caregivers of veterans who are enrolled in various VA home-based and long-term care programs;
- Spouses of veterans; and
- CHAMPVA recipients (spouses of permanently and totally disabled veterans or of veterans who have died from service-connected disabilities).