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U.S. Sens. Baldwin and Tillis: Introduce bipartisan legislation to improve the quality of health care for veterans

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Thom Tillis (R-NC) introduced the bipartisan Veterans-Specific Education for Tomorrow's Health Professionals (VET HP) Act that aims to better educate future health care professionals on the specific medical needs of veterans so they can provide the highest quality care to those who have served.

"We have a shared responsibility to do right by our veterans and that includes making sure our doctors and nurses are trained and well-equipped to deliver the highest quality care to those who have served," said Senator Baldwin. "Students interested in a medical career need better access to training opportunities, and our VA medical centers need to attract a workforce with more exposure to the VA system at an earlier stage in their education in order to better understand veterans' specific health needs. This bipartisan legislation will help train the next generation of health professionals and ensure our veterans receive the care they deserve."

"Taking care of those who served our nation is among our highest callings, and it is our duty to ensure our veterans are receiving the highest quality of care," said Senator Tillis. "The bipartisan VET HP Act is an important step in the right direction as we continue to bolster the pipeline of health care providers, both in VA facilities, and in the community."

Those who have served in the armed forces have specific medical needs. Most medical school programs already require or recommend clinical observation hours

as part of an admission application. These opportunities are also limited to students who are from or attend schools outside major cities, as well as those whose families lack connections to the medical community. This bipartisan legislation would help fix that by expanding training and educational opportunities at VA medical centers to ensure our veterans receive the high-quality care they deserve.

“The pilot program created by the VET HP Act will provide undergraduate college students who are considering a career in medicine the opportunity to learn about the health care needs of our nation’s veterans. Our future physician workforce must be well-versed in the specific and often complex medical needs of veterans, and our veterans deserve to have doctors who understand their experiences. Both students and veterans will benefit from this innovative observation program. Most importantly, it will help fulfill our nation’s obligation to care for our veterans with the highest levels of skill, respect, and empathy,” said Dr. Robert Golden, dean of the School of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The VET HP Act directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to create a one-year pilot program at VA medical centers to provide undergraduate students who are interested a medical career a clinical observation experience.

Specifically, the legislation:

Provides a pathway for pre-health students to gain valuable shadowing hours and levels the playing field in admissions to health professions schools;
Expands the pool of health providers and fosters an early awareness to the specific health care needs of veterans; and
Requires the VA to select undergraduate students who are enrolled in an accredited program of study to participate in the program, prioritizing students in health professional shortage area, first generation college students, students referred by minority-serving institutions, and veterans.

More information about the VET HP Act is available here.