

The U.S. House today passed legislation that would provide support for all caregivers of veterans, improve VA care for women veterans, and expand VA programs for veterans living in rural areas.

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act (S. 1963) was passed by the Senate late last year and will now be sent to President Obama for his signature. The vote was 419 to zero.

"With this bill we reaffirm that the cost of the war must always include caring for the warrior," Welch said. "This means ensuring that rural veterans have access to VA care, it means supporting those who care for vets, and it means guaranteeing that women who serve their country receive excellent care as well."

The legislation would provide support services for caregivers of veterans, including training, counseling, mental health services and access to in-home respite care. Caregivers of Iraq veterans may also be eligible for monthly stipends, Health care through the CHAMPVA program and other support.

The bill will also expand and improve VA health care services for 1.8 million women veterans. It would implement reintegration programs specifically for women, establish a program to assist women who need intensive health care but lack sufficient child care, and provide post-delivery health care to the new born children of a women veterans.

Additionally, the bill would improve health care for veterans living in rural areas by expanding transportation to local VA hospitals and clinics through VA grants to local Veterans Service Organizations.