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National Survey Finds Overwhelming Support For VA Rule Granting Veterans Direct Access To Nurse Practitioner Care

Veterans' Families and Americans Across Political Spectrum Approve Plan to Reduce Wait Times and Improve VA Care

WASHINGTON, July 20, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A national survey released today by Veterans Deserve Care, a grassroots campaign led by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) with support from veterans, caregivers, and nurse practitioners, finds that 88 percent of Americans support a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) proposed rule that would give veterans direct access to nurse practitioners in VA facilities, as well as 91 percent of Americans who have a veteran in their household.

On May 25, the VA established a sixty-day public comment period on a proposed rule that would reduce wait times in VA facilities and increase veteran access to high quality care by giving them direct access to advanced practice registered nurses, including NPs. According to the VA, 505,000 veterans are wait-listed 30 days and nearly 300,000 are waiting between 31 and 60 days for health services. The proposal is an effort to modernize the VA system and adopt a 21st century approach to health care delivery and access for veterans.



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The survey of 1,006 adults, conducted July 14-17 by the Mellman Group, a Washington, DC based survey research firm, found strong support across party lines, with 91 percent of Republicans and 90 percent of Democrats supporting the proposed rule. In addition, 75 percent of Americans, and 80 percent of Americans who have seen a nurse practitioner, "strongly" support the proposed rule.

"Americans agree that nurse practitioners are an essential component to answering our veterans' health care needs," said David Hebert, CEO, AANP. "NPs are the primary care providers of choice for millions of Americans and it's time we allow our veterans the same level of access to timely high-quality health care," said Dr. Cindy Cooke, DNP, FNP-C, FAANP, president of AANP.

"Veterans rely on VA health care to take care of them and the VA's nurse practitioners are qualified to provide our veterans with the care they need and deserve," said Major General Vincent Boles, U.S. Army (retired).

More than 4,800 NPs work across the VA providing clinical assessments, ordering and interpreting diagnostic test results, making diagnoses, and initiating treatment plans, including prescribing medications. Patients in 21 states and the District of Columbia already have direct access to NP care, with outcomes equivalent to or better than those of physicians. NPs hold graduate degrees, national certification, and have years of academic and clinical education.

"Americans recognize NPs' 50-year track record of providing care for our patients, including our nation's veterans, makes nurse practitioners a zero risk, zero cost, zero delay solution for timely, high-quality care in the VA system," added Dr. Cooke. "This rule must be swiftly enacted for the immediate benefit of our veterans."

The American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) strongly supports enactment of the rule and sponsored the Veterans Deserve Care survey. The VA's proposed rule will be open for public comment until July 25, 2016.

The American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) is the largest professional membership organization for nurse practitioners (NPs) of all specialties. It represents the interests of more than 222,000 NPs, including more than 68,000 individual members and 200 organizations, providing a unified networking platform and advocating for their role as providers of high-quality, cost-effective, comprehensive, patient-centered and personalized health care. The organization provides legislative leadership at the local, state and national levels, advancing health policy; promoting excellence in practice, education and research; and establishing standards that best serve NP patients and other health care consumers.

For more information, visit aanp.org. To locate a nurse practitioner in your area, visit npfinder.com.

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