

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1272

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the feasibility and advisability of establishing a polytrauma rehabilitation center or polytrauma network site of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the southern New Mexico and El Paso, Texas, region, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 23, 2011

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico (for himself and Mr. BINGAMAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the feasibility and advisability of establishing a polytrauma rehabilitation center or polytrauma network site of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the southern New Mexico and El Paso, Texas, region, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Southern New Mexico
3 and El Paso, Texas, Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury
4 Care Improvement Act of 2011”.

5 **SEC. 2. REPORT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF POLYTRAUMA RE-**
6 **HABILITATION CENTER OR POLYTRAUMA**
7 **NETWORK SITE OF DEPARTMENT OF VET-**
8 **ERANS AFFAIRS IN SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO**
9 **AND EL PASO, TEXAS, REGION.**

10 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
11 ings:

12 (1) The military population of the southern
13 New Mexico and El Paso, Texas, region has grown
14 greatly since the United States has been involved in
15 military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and
16 members of the Armed Forces returning from such
17 operations to such region will require care at
18 polytrauma centers as a result of their involvement
19 with such operations.

20 (2) The population at Fort Bliss in Texas and
21 New Mexico is expected to grow from 9,300 mem-
22 bers of the Armed Forces in 2005 to an estimated
23 33,400 members of the Armed Forces by 2012 be-
24 cause of the ongoing expansion of Fort Bliss.

25 (3) Traumatic brain injury has become known
26 as one of the signature wounds of service in the

1 Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan because of
2 its high occurrence among veterans of such service.
3 Many members of the Armed Forces returning to
4 the El Paso, Texas, and southern New Mexico re-
5 gion from overseas service in the Armed Forces are
6 expected to suffer from traumatic brain injury or
7 other forms of injury requiring treatment at a
8 polytrauma rehabilitation center or polytrauma net-
9 work site.

10 (4) A recent RAND Corporation study esti-
11 mates that as many as 20 percent of the veterans
12 who served in the Armed Forces in Iraq and Af-
13 ghanistan have a traumatic brain injury as a result
14 of such service, and many of these veterans require
15 ongoing care for mild, moderate, or severe traumatic
16 brain injury.

17 (5) The Department of Veterans Affairs rec-
18 ommends that all veterans experiencing a
19 polytraumatic injury be referred to a polytrauma re-
20 habilitation center or polytrauma network site of the
21 Department.

22 (6) The polytrauma system of care of the De-
23 partment includes 4 polytrauma rehabilitation cen-
24 ters and 21 polytrauma network sites, none of which
25 are located within 300 miles driving distance of Fort

1 Bliss, White Sands Missile Range, or Holloman Air
2 Force Base.

3 (7) The large military population in the south-
4 ern New Mexico and El Paso, Texas, region neces-
5 sitates a new polytrauma rehabilitation center or
6 polytrauma network site of the Department to deal
7 with the significant hardships veterans residing in
8 such region require.

9 (b) REPORT.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
11 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
12 retary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress
13 a report on the feasibility and advisability of estab-
14 lishing a polytrauma rehabilitation center or
15 polytrauma network site of the Department of Vet-
16 erans Affairs in the southern New Mexico and El
17 Paso, Texas, region that is within a reasonable driv-
18 ing distance of Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile
19 Range, and Holloman Air Force Base.

20 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The report required by
21 paragraph (1) shall include the following:

22 (A) An assessment of the adequacy of ex-
23 isting Department facilities in the southern
24 New Mexico and El Paso, Texas, region to ad-
25 dress matters that are otherwise addressed by

1 polytrauma rehabilitation centers and
2 polytrauma network sites of the Department.

3 (B) A comparative assessment of the effec-
4 tiveness of rehabilitation programs for individ-
5 uals with traumatic brain injuries in urban
6 areas with the effectiveness of such programs
7 for individuals with traumatic brain injuries in
8 rural and frontier communities.

9 (C) An assessment of whether therapies
10 that can prevent or remediate the development
11 of secondary neurologic conditions related to
12 traumatic brain injury can be interrupted by
13 stress caused by living in an urban area.

14 (D) The relation of high cost of living to
15 the recovery of veterans and the impact on their
16 families in comparison to recovery in an area
17 where there is a lower cost of living.

18 (3) LOCATIONS.—In preparing the report re-
19 quired by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall con-
20 sider and evaluate various locations for the potential
21 location of a new polytrauma rehabilitation center or
22 polytrauma network site. One location receiving such
23 consideration and evaluation shall be the Fort Bay-
24 ard Medical Center in Grant County, New Mexico.

1 (4) CONSULTATION.—In preparing the report
2 required by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall con-
3 sult with appropriate State and local government
4 agencies in the southern New Mexico and El Paso,
5 Texas, region.

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