S.C.R. No. 37

By: Van de Putte

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CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Military veterans who have served their country 3 honorably and who were promised and have earned health care and 4 benefits from the federal government through the Department of 5 Veterans Affairs are now in need of these benefits; and

6 WHEREAS, Federal discretionary funding is controlled by the 7 executive branch and the United States Congress through the budget 8 and appropriations process; and

9 WHEREAS, Direct funding provides the Department of Veterans 10 Affairs with a reliable, predictable, and consistent source of 11 funding to provide timely, efficient, and high-quality health care 12 for our veterans; and

WHEREAS, Currently almost 90 percent of federal health care spending is direct rather than discretionary, and only the funding for health care for active duty military, Native Americans, and veterans is subject to the discretion of the United States Congress; and

WHEREAS, Discretionary funding for health care lags behind both medical inflation and the increased demand for services; for example, the enrollment for veterans' health care increased 134 percent between fiscal years 1996 and 2004 yet funding increased only 34 percent during the same period when adjusted to 1996 dollars; and

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WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs is the largest

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integrated health care system in the United States and has four critical health care missions: to provide health care to veterans, to educate and train health care personnel, to conduct medical research, and to serve as a backup to the United States Department of Defense and support communities in times of crisis; and

6 WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs operates 157 7 hospitals, with at least one in each of the contiguous states, 8 Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia; and

9 WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs operates more 10 than 850 ambulatory care and community-based outpatient clinics, 11 132 nursing homes, 42 residential rehabilitation treatment 12 programs, and 88 home care programs; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs provides a wide 13 range of specialized services to meet the unique needs of veterans, 14 15 including spinal cord injury and dysfunction care and rehabilitation, blind rehabilitation, traumatic brain injury care, 16 post-traumatic stress disorder treatment, amputee care 17 and 18 prosthetics programs, mental health and substance abuse programs, and long-term care programs; and 19

20 WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs health care 21 system is severely underfunded, and had funding for the 22 department's medical programs been allowed to grow proportionately 23 as the system sought to admit newly eligible veterans following the 24 eligibility reform legislation in 1996, the current veterans' 25 health care budget would be approximately \$10 billion more; and

26 WHEREAS, In a spirit of bipartisan accommodation, members of 27 the United States Congress should collectively resolve the problem

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of discretionary funding and jointly fashion an acceptable formula for funding the medical programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby express its profound gratitude for the sacrifices made by veterans, including those who suffer from medical or mental health problems resulting from injuries that occurred while serving in the United States Armed Forces at home or abroad; and, be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the legislature hereby respectfully urge the 10 Congress of the United States to support legislation for veterans' 11 health care budget reform to allow assured funding; and, be it 12 further

RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official 13 copies of this resolution to the secretary of veterans affairs, to 14 the president of the United States, to the speaker of the house of 15 16 representatives and the president of the senate of the United 17 States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to 18 the congress with the request that this resolution be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of 19 the United States of America. 20

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