



H.R. 5729 – Spina Bifida Health Care Program Expansion Act

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 5729 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Brad Ellsworth (D-IN) on April 8, 2008. The House Committee on Veteran's Affairs agreed to the bill, as amended, by voice vote on April 30, 2008.

H.R. 5729 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on May 20, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 5729 directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide comprehensive health care benefits to the children of Vietnam veterans who were born with Spina Bifida.

The assistance provided by H.R. 5729 is to apply to medical care given after this bill has been enacted.

BACKGROUND

The Veterans Benefit Act of 2003 was signed into law on December 16, 2003. This legislation provides health care benefits children born with Spina Bifida and are the natural children of men and women who served in Korea during the September 1, 1967 – August 31, 1971 period. Qualifying children's parents must have served in the active duty military, naval, or air service and have been exposed to herbicide agents while in service. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs the exposure of these veterans to these herbicides while in the service are a presumptive contributing factor to their children's spina bifida.

According to the National Institutes of Health, "Spina bifida (SB) is a neural tube defect (a disorder involving incomplete development of the brain, spinal cord, and/or their protective coverings) caused by the failure of the fetus's spine to close properly during the first month of pregnancy."

[Department of Veteran's Affairs website](#)

[National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke informational website](#)

COST

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$11 million over the 2009-2013 period, assuming appropriation of the estimated amounts.

[Full CBO cost estimate for H.R. 5729](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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