

114TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 4352

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 7, 2016

Received

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## AN ACT

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program establishing a patient self-scheduling appointment system, 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 “Faster Care for Vet-  
3 erans Act of 2016”.

4 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM ESTABLISHING A PATIENT SELF-  
5 SCHEDULING APPOINTMENT SYSTEM.**

6 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—Not later than 120 days after  
7 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of  
8 Veterans Affairs shall commence a pilot program under  
9 which veterans use an Internet website or mobile applica-  
10 tion to schedule and confirm medical appointments at  
11 medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

12 (b) SELECTION OF LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall  
13 select not less than three Veterans Integrated Services  
14 Networks in which to carry out the pilot program under  
15 subsection (a).

16 (c) CONTRACTS.—

17 (1) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary shall seek to  
18 enter into a contract using competitive procedures  
19 with one or more contractors to provide the sched-  
20 uling capability described in subsection (a).

21 (2) NOTICE OF COMPETITION.—Not later than  
22 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,  
23 the Secretary shall issue a request for proposals for  
24 the contract described in paragraph (1). Such re-  
25 quest shall be full and open to any contractor that  
26 has an existing commercially available, off-the-shelf

1 online patient self-scheduling system that includes  
2 the capabilities specified in section 3(a).

3 (3) SELECTION.—Not later than 120 days after  
4 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary  
5 shall award a contract to one or more contractors  
6 pursuant to the request for proposals under para-  
7 graph (2).

8 (d) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided by para-  
10 graph (2), the Secretary shall carry out the pilot  
11 program under subsection (a) for an 18-month pe-  
12 riod.

13 (2) EXTENSION.—The Secretary may extend  
14 the duration of the pilot program under subsection  
15 (a), and may expand the selection of Veterans Inte-  
16 grated Services Networks under subsection (b), if  
17 the Secretary determines that the pilot program is  
18 reducing the wait times of veterans seeking medical  
19 care and ensuring that more available appointment  
20 times are filled.

21 (e) MOBILE APPLICATION DEFINED.—In this sec-  
22 tion, the term “mobile application” means a software pro-  
23 gram that runs on the operating system of a cellular tele-  
24 phone, tablet computer, or similar portable computing de-  
25 vice that transmits data over a wireless connection.

1 **SEC. 3. CAPABILITIES OF PATIENT SELF-SCHEDULING AP-**  
2 **POINTMENT SYSTEM.**

3 (a) **MINIMUM CAPABILITIES.**—The Secretary of Vet-  
4 erans Affairs shall ensure that the patient self-scheduling  
5 appointment system used in the pilot program under sec-  
6 tion 2, and any other patient self-scheduling appointment  
7 system developed or used by the Department of Veterans  
8 Affairs, includes, at a minimum, the following capabilities:

9 (1) Capability to schedule, modify, and cancel  
10 appointments for primary care, specialty care, and  
11 mental health.

12 (2) Capability to support appointments for the  
13 provision of health care regardless of whether such  
14 care is provided in person or through telehealth serv-  
15 ices.

16 (3) Capability to view appointment availability  
17 in real time.

18 (4) Capability to make available, in real time,  
19 appointments that were previously filled but later  
20 cancelled by other patients.

21 (5) Capability to provide prompts or reminders  
22 to veterans to schedule follow-up appointments.

23 (6) Capability to be used 24 hours per day, 7  
24 days per week.

25 (7) Capability to integrate with the Veterans  
26 Health Information Systems and Technology Archi-

1 tecture of the Department, or such successor infor-  
2 mation technology system.

3 (b) INDEPENDENT VALIDATION AND  
4 VERIFICATION.—

5 (1) INDEPENDENT ENTITY.—

6 (A) The Secretary shall seek to enter into  
7 an agreement with an appropriate non-govern-  
8 mental, not-for-profit entity with expertise in  
9 health information technology to independently  
10 validate and verify that the patient self-sched-  
11 uling appointment system used in the pilot pro-  
12 gram under section 2, and any other patient  
13 self-scheduling appointment system developed  
14 or used by the Department of Veterans Affairs,  
15 includes the capabilities specified in subsection  
16 (a).

17 (B) Each independent validation and  
18 verification conducted under subparagraph (A)  
19 shall be completed as follows:

20 (i) With respect to the validation and  
21 verification of the patient self-scheduling  
22 appointment system used in the pilot pro-  
23 gram under section 2, by not later than 60  
24 days after the date on which such pilot  
25 program commences.

1 (ii) With respect to any other patient  
2 self-scheduling appointment system devel-  
3 oped or used by the Department of Vet-  
4 erans Affairs, by not later than 60 days  
5 after the date on which such system is de-  
6 ployed, regardless of whether such deploy-  
7 ment is on a limited basis, but not includ-  
8 ing any deployments for testing purposes.

9 (2) GAO EVALUATION.—

10 (A) The Comptroller General of the United  
11 States shall evaluate each validation and  
12 verification conducted under paragraph (1).

13 (B) Not later than 30 days after the date  
14 on which the Comptroller General completes an  
15 evaluation under paragraph (1), the Comp-  
16 troller General shall submit to the appropriate  
17 congressional committees a report on such eval-  
18 uation.

19 (C) In this paragraph, the term “appro-  
20 priate congressional committees” means—

21 (i) the Committees on Veterans’ Af-  
22 fairs of the House of Representatives and  
23 the Senate; and

1 (ii) the Committees on Appropriations  
2 of the House of Representatives and the  
3 Senate.

4 (c) CERTIFICATION.—

5 (1) CAPABILITIES INCLUDED.—Not later than  
6 December 31, 2017, the Secretary shall certify to  
7 the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of  
8 Representatives and the Senate that the patient self-  
9 scheduling appointment system used in the pilot pro-  
10 gram under section 2, and any other patient self-  
11 scheduling appointment system developed or used by  
12 the Department of Veterans Affairs as of the date  
13 of the certification, includes the capabilities specified  
14 in subsection (a).

15 (2) NEW SYSTEMS.—If the Secretary develops  
16 or begins using a new patient self-scheduling ap-  
17 pointment system that is not covered by a certifi-  
18 cation made under paragraph (1), the Secretary  
19 shall certify to such committees that such new sys-  
20 tem includes the capabilities specified in subsection  
21 (a) by not later than 30 days after the date on  
22 which the Secretary determines to replace the pre-  
23 vious patient self-scheduling appointment system.

24 (3) EFFECT OF CAPABILITIES NOT IN-  
25 CLUDED.—If the Secretary does not make a timely

1 certification under paragraph (1) or paragraph (2),  
2 the Secretary shall replace any patient self-sched-  
3 uling appointment system developed by the Sec-  
4 retary that is in use with a commercially available,  
5 off-the-shelf online patient self-scheduling system  
6 that includes the capabilities specified in subsection  
7 (a).

8 **SEC. 4. PROHIBITION ON NEW APPROPRIATIONS.**

9 No additional funds are authorized to carry out the  
10 requirements of this Act. Such requirements shall be car-  
11 ried out using amounts otherwise authorized.

Passed the House of Representatives December 6,  
2016.

Attest:

KAREN L. HAAS,

*Clerk.*