

# ASSISTED LIVING SOLUTIONS: Expand Veterans Care Options

THE CHALLENGE **Many Veterans do not have a choice in their long-term care.**

THE SOLUTION **The VA should use existing authority to promote cost-effective care options for veterans.**

## Issue Summary

- Our veteran population is aging rapidly, and their care needs are growing.
  - ▶ Roughly half of the 9 million veterans currently enrolled in veterans' health care programs are 65 or older.
  - ▶ The number of veterans aged 85 and older receiving care from VA health services is expected to grow approximately 535 percent over the next 20 years.
  - ▶ The VA predicts that approximately 80 percent of veterans will develop the need for long-term services.
- The VA is restricted from covering "room and board fees" at assisted living communities, which precludes veterans from utilizing this long-term care option. Many veterans eligible for nursing home care may not need skilled nursing or other institutional settings and may prefer a more home-like setting that promotes independence such as assisted living when appropriate.
- Current veterans benefit, Aid and Attendance, is difficult to access due to a burdensome application process and restrictions.
- The VA reported to Congress that it could save \$69,101 per veteran per year, for veterans who choose assisted living instead of nursing care (\$51,600 to \$120,701)

## Policy Solution

**The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act**, signed into law in January 2025, establishes a three-year pilot program to furnish assisted living services to certain veterans.

The VA should expand upon this program and allow all veterans to choose assisted living for their long-term care needs, and simplify the Aid and Attendance program.

**ACTION:** Send a letter to the VA asking to expand access of assisted living to all veterans, giving them a choice in their care and saving federal funding.



**The Veteran population is rapidly aging, with those needing care increasing 535% in 20-years.**



**The VA is restricted in paying for assisted living care.**



**The VA could save nearly \$70,000 per year for every Veteran who chooses assisted living.**

## WHAT IS ASSISTED LIVING?

**Assisted living is a residential long-term care setting for older adults who need assistance with activities of daily living. They are seniors' homes—not institutional facilities.**

Care involves managing multiple chronic health issues, supporting physical and mental well-being, and socialization. By offering nutritious restaurant-style dining options, a diverse calendar of social and educational activities, and a committed focus on resident engagement, assisted living plays a critical role in supporting seniors' independence, happiness, and overall health. Assisted living is licensed and regulated in all 50 states and D.C.