

Senate Joint Resolution No. 10

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 124

Senate Joint Resolution No. 10—Relative to military health care.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 25, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 10, Committee on Veterans Affairs. Military: health care.

This measure would request that the President and the Congress of the United States pass H.R. 816 that would prohibit certain increases in fees for military health care.

WHEREAS, Career uniformed service members and their families endure unique and extraordinary demands and sacrifices during the course of a decades-long career protecting freedoms for all Americans; and

WHEREAS, The extent of these demands and sacrifices is never so evident as during times of war, not only in today's global war on terrorism, but also during the last six decades of hot and cold wars when today's retired service members were on continuous call to enter into harm's way when and as needed; and

WHEREAS, The demands and sacrifices are such that few Americans are willing to accept them for a multidecade career; and

WHEREAS, The primary offset for enduring the extraordinary sacrifices inherent in a military career is a system of extraordinary retirement benefits, including health care coverage considerably better than that afforded civilian workers, that a grateful nation provides for those who choose to subordinate much of their personal life to the national interest for so many years; and

WHEREAS, Many private sector firms are curtailing health benefits and shifting significantly higher costs to their employees; and

WHEREAS, One effect of this curtailment is that retired service members who work for those employers increasingly depend on the TRICARE coverage they earned through their military service; and

WHEREAS, While the Department of Defense has made some efforts to constrain TRICARE programs costs, a large part of the department's effort has been aimed at shifting a larger share of cost burdens to retired service members; and

WHEREAS, The beneficiary cost increases proposed by the Department of Defense fail to recognize adequately that career service members paid enormous in-kind premiums through their extended service and sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, A significant share of the nation's health care providers refuse to accept new TRICARE patients because TRICARE pays them

significantly less than commercial insurance programs and imposes unique administrative requirements; and

WHEREAS, The significant majority of the savings that the Department of Defense associates with the proposed fee increases is expected to result from deterring a large portion of TRICARE beneficiaries from using their earned military health benefits; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has chosen to count the accrual deposit to the Department of Defense Medicare-Eligible Retiree Health Care Fund against the budget of the Department of Defense, contrary to the amendments made by Section 725 of Public Law 108-375; and

WHEREAS, Leaders of the Department of Defense have reported to Congress that counting these deposits against the budget of the Department of Defense is impinging on other readiness needs, including weapons programs, an inappropriate situation that Section 725 of Public Law 108-375 was expressly intended to prevent; and

WHEREAS, The Department of the Defense and the nation have a committed health benefits obligation to retired uniformed service members that exceeds the obligation of corporate employers to civilian employees; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has many additional options to constrain the growth of health care spending in ways that do not disadvantage beneficiaries and should pursue any and all such options rather than seeking large fee increases for beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature of the State of California respectfully requests the President and the Congress of the United States to pass H.R. 816 that would prohibit certain increases in fees for military health care; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.