

# Elizabeth Dole Veterans Programs Improvement Act of 2023

VOTE  
NO!

TITLE I	-	ELIZABETH DOLE HOME CARE ACT
TITLE II	-	IMPROVEMENTS TO FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM
TITLE III	-	MEDICAL CANNABIS RESEARCH
TITLE IV	-	HOUSING MATTERS
TITLE V	-	OTHER MATTERS

VOTE  
NO!

## Overview for Cloture **S.326** (amendment)

Previously **five** individual bills, Senator Tester opted to toss them together into **S. 329 Medical Cannabis Research for Veterans** bill to slide in Senator Moran's *Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act of 2023* (failed *Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services Act of 2022*) and *RESPECT Act of 2023* (failed in 2022).

➔ **Title I - Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act (#DoleAct2023)** is a **duplication** of services bill that will be providing services that are already in place, are being put into place, or are slated to be in place without the need for this bill. The only thing the bill will do is increase the debt and provide a financial incentive to VA facility directors to encourage employees to deny access to the Program of Comprehensive Assistance (PCAFC) in favor of referring to other programs to use “preferred partners” who are associated with nonprofits to ensure they meet a quota to receive bonuses.

Full break of individual items with facts showing duplications: <https://bit.ly/Dole-Act-Facts>

- Veteran Directed Care is already expanding and has accelerated expansion to be fully expanded within two years; removing any need for this provision.
- Patient Care Services Programs page is the website this bill wishes to create, removing the need for this provision <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/programs.asp>
- Coordination of care is a failure in training or of staff to do their job, the SOPs and handbooks are available, removing the need for this provision.
- GOA report and VA response in 2020 remove the need for the GEC/CSP research for rural veterans (see below) provision.
- The financial incentives for facility directors are unacceptable and are sure to remove caregiver benefits resulting in the denial of access to CSP for many who qualify.

➔ **Title II - Improvements to Family Caregiver Program (#RESPECTAct2023)** is a Veteran Caregiver bill, one **Veteran Warriors** generally supports. Our concern with this bill is the language of the eligibility for neurological disorders and the restrictive criteria limiting mental health to only crisis/suicidal veterans. The bill is worded so that there is no separation of eligibility between mental health disorder assessment and neurological impairment assessment or to give grace for any veteran with a mental health disorder that creates cognitive difficulties. For example, referrals to suicide prevention and safety plans for suicide are two of the requirements to meet eligibility.

- Neurological disorders must consider both ADL needs and supervision, protection, or instruction. Neurological disorders typically come in pairs and do not improve.
- Not all mental health disorders create suicidal ideation, this is an unreasonable eligibility criterion or standard.
- VA Caregiver Support Program has created Mental Health Hubs to handle caregiver mental health, leaving us questioning the need for grants for mental health. Our other concern is that giving grants to nonprofits to provide mental health services would allow for the nonprofits to retain mental health records on the caregivers to use as they see fit, allowing for research, etc.

➔ **Title III - Medical Cannabis Research (#VetCannabisAct2023)** is being used as a shell to get these two bills passed because they do not have the support they need to pass on their own. The bill claims its purpose is to research cannabis; however, VA currently has the authority to do research on cannabis and states as much on the website. The ability to research and the ability to prescribe widely are vastly different.

- VA scientists may conduct research on marijuana benefits and risks, and potential for abuse, under regulatory approval.
- Applied Cannabis Research 2019  
<https://www.research.va.gov/services/csrd/Loflin-cannabis.pdf>





## Title I - Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act #DoleAct2023

- ? **Questionable Positive:** Claims to require PCAFC to contact all participants within PGCSS to inform them of services they may qualify for; however, a more cost-effective solution is reading the regulation because it is required as is.
- ⊗ **Negative:** This bill is a duplication of services that are already in place, in the process of being expanded, or are being put into place without this bill.
- ⊗ **Negative:** The bill provides financial incentives for VA directors to deny veterans the right to choose to participate in programs such as PCAFC which they may well qualify for but be denied access to due to a need to meet quotas for referrals to other programs.
- ⊗ **Negative:** Increased national debt without a need and does not benefit our nation's veterans and caregivers.



## Title II - Improvements to the Family Caregiver Program #RESPECTAct2023

- ✓ **Positive:** Senator Moran is attempting to bring awareness to neurological disorders, something VA has long ignored.
- ⊗ **Negative:** Criteria listed are too restrictive for mental health needs with no flexibility for any veteran who isn't suicidal. Does not account for any veteran with cognitive impairment that affects communication, processing, or implementation, including those with anxiety and depression.
- ⊗ **Negative:** Criteria listed for mental health would **not** be the same for neurological disorders, but no other criteria are listed for neurological disorders, leaving VA to group the two together and still not consider ADLs for neurology. Neurological disorders wouldn't necessarily cause a need for suicide prevention, making qualification for Caregiver Program next to impossible based on the criteria listed in this bill.
- ? **Questionable:** Grants for mental health. More information would be needed on this, perhaps sessions with caregivers, the Executive Director of the Caregiver Support Program, and other VSOs.

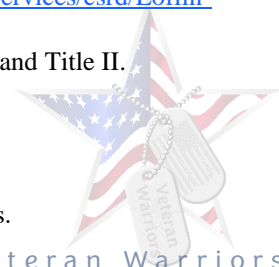


## Title III - Medical Cannabis Research #VetCannabisAct2023

- There is enough research out in the civilian sector, and VA has its own research. Veterans are tired of being lab rats and do not wish to have their lives regulated.
- FACT – VA has the authority to research – <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/marijuana.asp#:~:text=VA%20scientists%20may%20conduct%20research,medical%20centers%2C%20locations%20and%20grounds.>
- FACT – VA already researched cannabis use - <https://www.research.va.gov/services/csrd/Loflin-cannabis.pdf>
- It's unfair for this bill to have been used as a cover and vehicle to pass Title I and Title II.

## Title IV and V - Home Matters and Other Matters

- ❖ Separate Title IV and V from the package and vote on them as individual bills.



# Conclusion

**Vote NO on Cloture!** Separate all five bills and vote individually.

- ⊗ **Title I** should not be passed at all, no exception! Anyone supporting this bill is supporting the denial of veterans’ access to programs they wish to participate in as long as **Title I - Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act**, previously *Elizabeth Dole Home and Community Based Services Act* remains intact. At best, that bill is self-serving and deceitful, at worst with its long list of duplicative services and the harm it will bring to the community.
- ✓ **Title II** can be saved but **needs revisions**; should be separated and voted on by itself. Only yes if revised.
- ✓ **Title III** should not be held hostage by other bills; it should be separated and voted on by itself.

**Title IV** should be separated and voted on by itself.

**Title V** should be separated and voted on by itself.

Chart View:

Title	Name	#Social Tag	Veteran Warriors Recommendation
<b>Cloture S.326</b>	Elizabeth Dole Veterans Programs Improvement Act of 2023	#NoDoleProgramAct2023	<b>Vote: NO</b> <b>Reason:</b> Bills are not appropriate for package vote, see other pages.
<b>Title I</b>	Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act	#DoleAct2023	<b>Vote: NO</b> <b>Reason:</b> Duplication of services in place or set to be in place. Bill has unnecessary funding and no purpose. <b>Concern:</b> Incentivize VA facility directors to encourage denial of access to PCAFC to ensure receipt of bonuses, must meet the quota for referrals other programs per bill.
<b>Title II</b>	Improvements to Family Caregiver Program	#RESPECTAct2023	<b>Vote: Amend</b> <b>Reason:</b> Eligibility leaves no room for non-crisis or suicidal mental health veterans, or neurological disorders. <b>Concern:</b> Needs clarity; mental health grants could lead to nonprofits accessing records for research purposes.
<b>Title III</b>	Medical Cannabis Research	#VetCannabisAct2023	<b>Vote:</b> Consider with <b>Amendment</b>
<b>Title IV</b>	Home Matters	N/A	No Review Given Here
<b>Title V</b>	Other Matters	N/A	No Review Given Here

★ **Finally**, Veteran Warriors would strongly recommend putting forth a bill for veteran caregivers that would benefit the community, here is a link to our recommendations that are highly favored within the community:

<https://bit.ly/2023-pcafc-legislative-regulatory-needs>



For more information, contact [info@veteran-warriors.org](mailto:info@veteran-warriors.org)