

## S. 629, Accountability in Department of Veterans Affairs Scheduling and Consult Management Act

As reported by the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs on September 15, 2020

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2021	2021-2025	2021-2030
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	6	26	not estimated
Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	No	<b>Mandate Effects</b>	
Increases on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2031?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No

S. 629 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to evaluate its processes for scheduling appointments for health care from the department and from nondepartmental providers, to establish performance metrics for each step of that process, and to report on VA's performance in meeting those metrics. In total, CBO estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$26 million over the 2021-2025 period. Such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriations.

Section 4 would require VA to set timeliness standards for each step of the process for scheduling veterans for care with nondepartmental providers, to measure the success of each VA health care facility in meeting those standards, and to publicly report those results online on a biweekly basis. Using information on the costs of similar information technology efforts, CBO estimates that it would cost \$3 million to develop and maintain a system to monitor scheduling performance for VA's facilities. CBO also expects that VA would need one full-time employee for each of the 18 veterans' health care regions to administer that system and publish measurement data. At an average cost of \$122,000 per employee, salaries and expenses would total \$10 million over five years. Thus, CBO estimates that satisfying the requirements of section 4 would cost \$13 million over the 2021-2025 period.

Section 3 would require VA to set standards for scheduling and completing appointments for health care at VA facilities. It also would require VA to audit the performance of each

facility in meeting those standards. Facilities that perform poorly would be audited again one year later. In 2015, VA spent \$66 million for a private entity to conduct an extensive audit of 12 aspects of its health care system, including scheduling procedures. Using that average cost of almost \$6 million for each aspect audited, CBO estimates that it would cost \$6 million to complete the initial audit to assess each facility’s ability to meet the new scheduling standards. CBO expects that half of the facilities would require a follow-up assessment at a cost of \$3 million. Audit costs would total \$9 million over the 2021-2023 period.

Finally, the bill would require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to submit two reports to the Congress on VA’s compliance with its scheduling policies and on the reliability of the performance data that VA publishes. VA also would be required to submit eight reports to the Congress on the requirements of the scheduling process. Using information on reports of similar scope, CBO estimates that preparing the GAO reports would cost \$3 million and preparing the VA reports would cost \$1 million over the 2021-2025 period.

The costs of the legislation, detailed in Table 1, fall within budget function 700 (veterans benefits and services).

**Table 1.**  
**Estimated Increases in Spending Subject to Appropriation Under S. 629**

	By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars					2021-2025
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
IT & Administration						
Estimated Authorization	4	2	2	3	3	14
Estimated Outlays	4	2	2	2	3	13
Independent Audits						
Estimated Authorization	1	6	3	*	0	10
Estimated Outlays	1	5	3	*	0	9
Reports to Congress						
Estimated Authorization	1	1	*	1	*	4
Estimated Outlays	1	1	*	1	*	4
Total Changes						
Estimated Authorization	6	9	5	4	3	28
Estimated Outlays	6	8	5	3	3	26

IT = Information Technology; Components may not sum to totals because of rounding; \* = between zero and \$500,000.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Etaf Khan. The estimate was reviewed by Leo Lex, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.