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## 10/21/2008 Moran's Rural Veterans Legislation Signed Into Law

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran today announced that his legislation to provide more health care opportunities for veterans living in rural areas was recently signed into law by the President. Moran's bill, the Rural Veterans Access to Care Act, was approved as part of a larger veterans health measure, S. 2162. The Rural Veterans Access to Care Act will enable rural veterans enrolled in the Veterans Affairs (VA) health system to receive care locally rather than traveling long distances to VA facilities. Many Kansas veterans living in rural parts of the state will be part of the demonstration project authorized by this legislation.

"Despite our success at establishing more VA outpatient clinics and increasing veterans' travel reimbursements, the reality is that some veterans live in remote areas beyond the VA's ability to construct medical facilities to care for them," Moran said. "Too often, the distance means rural veterans are foregoing a necessary trip to receive health care attention. This legislation will provide these underserved veterans the choice to receive care closer to home at a local hospital or physician's office rather than traveling hours to VA facilities. This common sense approach will not only grant rural veterans the convenience of accessing care in their home communities, it also will mean additional patients for rural health care providers to help ensure that they can continue to serve rural populations."

Forty-four percent of military recruits are from rural areas, as are many of the Guard and Reserve members our nation increasingly calls to service. The Rural Veterans Access to Care Act will establish a three-year pilot program in several rural regions of the country to allow the most underserved rural veterans to take advantage of existing rural health providers, such as local hospitals, community health centers and rural health clinics. To qualify, a veteran must live at least 60 miles from a VA primary care facility like an outpatient clinic, 120 miles from a VA hospital or 240 miles from a VA specialized care facility when seeking that care.

"I am very pleased with the passage of this important bill as it will demonstrate the improved care and possible collaborations between providers already caring for veterans in our communities and the veterans health care system," said Dr. Bob Moser of Tribune, a member of the VA Rural Health Advisory Committee. "It also says thanks to the many thousands of rural veterans who faithfully served their country. It will help by removing some of the hardships and

improve access to health care services many rural veterans deserve but would otherwise be unable to obtain."

Moran is a senior member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. Since first coming to Congress, Moran has focused on improving health care for veterans. He authored a successful measure to increase the mileage reimbursement rate for veterans traveling to VA care and has worked to open outpatient care clinics in Hutchinson, Hays, Dodge City, Salina and Junction City.

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