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## Senators Propose TRICARE Dependent Coverage Extension Act

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Posted by: [Health.mil Staff](#)

Monday, April 19, 2010

A bill introduced to the U.S. Senate April 14 would, if passed into law, enable the dependent children of active duty service members and military retirees to remain covered by their parents' **TRICARE** benefit until age 26.

The bill is required to bring the TRICARE benefit in line with the health insurance reform law passed in March, which will allow civilian dependents to remain under their parents' health coverage to the age of 26.

The following [press release](#) was posted [April 14](#) to the Web site of Sen. Mark Begich of Alaska, who is a sponsor of the bill:

Washington, D.C. - Today, U.S. Senator Mark Udall of Colorado, joined by Senators Mark Begich of Alaska, and Claire McCaskill of Missouri - all members of the Senate Armed Services Committee - and Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, introduced a bill extending health insurance for military families. The bill enables the children of active duty service members and retirees to stay on their parents' policies until age 26.

The TRICARE Dependent Coverage Extension Act fulfills an important goal of health insurance reform legislation - allowing parents to cover their young adult children through age 26. While the health insurance reform law, which was signed in March, extended that coverage to civilian families, separate legislation was required for families insured through TRICARE - the Department of Defense health insurance program for military service members, retirees, and their families - because it is governed by a different section of the U.S. Code than civilian health care programs. The Senators' bill is a companion to one introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Martin Heinrich of New Mexico.

Extending insurance to cover young Americans until age 26 is critical, especially as they make the transition into the tough job market. TRICARE currently covers children to age 21, or 23 if they are full-time college students. The TRICARE extension will give dependent young adults without employer-provided health insurance the opportunity to pay a reasonable premium and stay covered until they are 26.

"Members of our armed forces and their families make tremendous sacrifices for our nation, and they deserve benefits that will help keep them healthy and secure," Senator Udall said. "Service members around the world worry about the health and financial security of their families back home. Extending existing health insurance coverage to children will help ensure we're doing our part to provide some peace of mind to military families."

"Being able to cover dependents on your health insurance plan up to age 26 is a key piece of the health insurance reform legislation and will allow thousands of Alaskans to keep their children on their policies saving families the extraordinary costs that can be incurred for medical treatment," Senator Begich said. "Extending that same benefit to our military families is the right thing to do as we continually strive to make sure we show appreciation for their service to our country."

"In a tough economy, young people may not be able to find a job with decent benefits through no fault of their own, and the children of military service members are no different," Senator McCaskill said. "Our men and women in uniform and their families make incredible sacrifices in defense of our country - we've got to make sure we provide them with the best health care coverage we can."

"This is the right thing to do for the men and women who have stood sentry protecting our freedoms," Senator Mikulski said. "If health care reform means that the kids of hedge fund managers can stay on their parents' health insurance until they're 26, kids in military families should be covered to age 26 too. I am honored to join Senator Udall and my Senate colleagues in introducing this bill to fix this health care reform bill error. We have our marching orders. We will fight to pass this bill."

"With each individual who generously dedicates their life to military service, there is a significant impact on those closest to them. We know this especially well in New Mexico, where we have a long and proud tradition of military service," said U.S. Representative Martin Heinrich (NM-1), who introduced H.R. 4923, the TRICARE Dependent Coverage Extension Act in the House last month. "Allowing parents to provide health coverage to their dependent adult children is just one of the many small things we can do to show our military families how much we appreciate them and honor their service to our country."