



FPMA is happy to announce that the U.S. Senate passed S 2372, the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (the **VA MISSION Act**). The bill [passed the U.S. House](#) last week and is expected to be signed by President Trump.

The VA MISSION Act includes language from the [VA Provider Equity Act](#), which reclassifies podiatrists as podiatric surgeons within the VA Health Administration (VHA), placing them in the same pay band as their allopathic and osteopathic peers. This update to decades-old regulations will go far in addressing the dire recruitment and retention issues in the VHA and ensure our veterans receive the best possible foot and ankle care.

"APMA is ecstatic that Congress has taken action to stem the growing podiatry staffing crisis at the VA, while properly recognizing podiatrists for their training and education," said APMA President Dennis R. Frisch, DPM. "Most importantly, we can now guarantee our veterans will be taken care of for years to come."

The passage of this legislation represents the largest advancement for federally employed podiatrists since 1976, and is the first bill specific to podiatry passed by the United States Congress. Rep. Brad Wenstrup, DPM (R-OH), who introduced the VA Provider Equity Act in the House, summed up his feelings: "I'm glad we are able to get this legislation across the finish line and finally tackle the disparities between the VA and the private sector. This [legislation] will increase the VA's ability to recruit and retain qualified specialists like podiatrists, and ensure that our veterans get the specific care and treatment they deserve."

This victory shows that advocacy efforts on the part of podiatrists worked! Benjamin J. Wallner, APMA Director of Legislative Advocacy and APMAPAC, is to be commended for his efforts, along with the APMA Board of Trustees, APMA Legislative Committee, APMAPAC Board, and APMA staff. APMA also recognizes all members who attended a Legislative Conference, contributed to [APMAPAC](#), used eAdvocacy, and reached out to their elected officials to advocate for podiatry.

"This bill has been a major initiative by APMA on behalf of our profession and our veterans. Your membership in APMA and contributions to APMAPAC allowed us to make the passage of this bill a reality, and I wish to extend my gratitude to everyone who helped us accomplish this effort," added Dr. Frisch.

This legislation is very significant and will lead to more emphasis on future parity issues, including the Helping Ensure Life- and Limb-Saving Access to Podiatric Physicians ([HELLPP](#)) Act, which seeks to appropriately recognize podiatrists for their care of Medicaid patients. FPMA members are encouraged to contact their respective senators and representatives to ask them to co-sponsor the Title 19 HELLPP Act. Let's continue to build on this success!

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