COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement from Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Markup of H.R. 6398

Chairman Smith: Today we will consider H.R. 6398, the Department of Energy Veterans' Health Initiative Act, introduced by Energy Subcommittee member Ralph Norman, and co-sponsored by joint Veterans Affairs and Science Committee members Neal Dunn and Clay Higgins, as well as 12 other Science Committee members.

This legislation authorizes the Department of Energy (DOE) to conduct collaborative research with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in order to solve complex, big data challenges focused on veteran's health care and basic science.

Currently, DOE and the VA collaborate through the "Million Veterans Program–Computational Health Analytics for Medical Precision to Improve Outcomes Now," or MVP-CHAMPION program.

Through this initiative, the VA collects genomic and health care data from veterans who volunteer for the program. The VA then provides this data to DOE, where it is stored in a secure site at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

This partnership provides VA researchers access to DOE's high performance computing research facilities—like the world's fastest supercomputer, the Summit computer at Oak Ridge. It also leverages DOE's expertise in complex modeling and data analysis, which can help the VA use their data to learn more about the causes and warning signs of various diseases.

By giving DOE access to a large-scale database, the VA will help the Energy Department develop next generation computing, algorithms and modeling capability.

While these tools can help the VA develop quality healthcare for veterans, they can also be applied to computing efforts in support of DOE's core mission programs, such as materials science, physics or nuclear weapons research.

This legislation will leverage DOE's world-leading computing capability to provide the VA with data analysis to improve veterans' quality of life.

Mr. Norman's bill also authorizes a two-year, cross-cutting research pilot program to advance research in artificial intelligence, data analytics and computational research. This pilot program supports DOE's efforts to improve the analysis and interpretation of big data challenges to meet the nuclear security, energy and science mission goals of the Department.

It will facilitate more collaborations like DOE's work with the VA, giving federal agencies, academia and industry the chance to benefit from the Department's expertise. I thank the bill's sponsors for bringing this important legislation before us today.

Finally, we are postponing action on the other bill noticed for this morning to address jurisdictional matters related to the bill. We plan to take action on the bill in the near future.

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