

# WHAT 2017 HAS BROUGHT FOR SENIORS, veterans and persons with disabilities

Submitted by Campbell & Smith Attorneys at Law

## What Happened with Health Care?

2017 saw multiple attempts by Congress to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. The House passed its legislation but Senate Republicans did not.

Even though the Republicans have a majority in both the House and Senate, they only have 52 Republicans in the Senate. Sixty votes are needed to pass new legislation, so they have been attempting to pass the legislation through the Budget Reconciliation process, which only requires 51 votes. However, because that process is limited to budget items only, they could not include provisions that some Republicans wanted in a full repeal and replace bill—such as letting insurance companies sell across state lines to increase competition, lower prices and create better plans, and allowing the government to negotiate lower drug prices.

## What This Means for Seniors, Veterans and the Disabled

The uncertainty about the future of health insurance is very unsettling to many seniors, the disabled and veterans who depend on Affordable Care Act or Medicaid for their health insurance and almost 70 million are currently covered by Medicaid, including about 11 million veterans who do not get their health care through the Veterans Affairs system.

## Specific Actions for Veterans

The Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017 was passed in June and promptly signed by President Trump. Written in response to an Obama era scandal in which veterans died waiting for doctors' appointments, this law will make it easier to discipline and fire bad employees, better protect those who report misconduct and improve care for veterans.

Unemployment rates for veterans fall in October to 3.7 percent, continuing a long-term downward trend in unemployment among U.S. Armed Services. This rate is down from 4.7 percent in October 2016 and 10.2 percent in 2009.

The VA Connect App will allow VA providers in cities where there are a lot of doctors and specialists to help veterans in areas where there aren't as many healthcare professionals. This will be a valuable service for those who are home-bound, live in rural areas or need help in the area of mental health and suicide prevention.

## A Look Ahead to 2018

Congress is already at work on tax cuts and tax reform.

We will most likely see continued efforts to either repeal or replace the Affordable Care Act.

Treatment of veterans will continue to be an important issue for members of Congress and the President.

It should be another exciting year! If you or those you serve have any questions, we would be happy to hear from you.

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## Why might I need an Elder Law Attorney?

- Asset Preservation in the face of long-term care costs.
- Qualification for Medicaid and VA benefits.
- Planning for incapacity and making sure your wishes are followed.
- Families with loved ones with special needs and preservation of their benefits.

7000 Houston Rd.  
Suite 3  
Florence, KY 41042  
(859) 823-2300

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