

CONGRESS MOVES BEYOND THE BIOPSY

Liver health can be evaluated in several ways. Legislation is under consideration by U.S. Congress to remove potential barriers to Veterans using these tools.

GLI has worked closely with congressional staff to ensure that Veterans diagnosed with MASH/NASH do not face any barriers to treatment and care. Following this coordination, the reports accompanying both the House and Senate versions of the *Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act* (Mil/Con appropriations reports) now include language that advances GLI's efforts to remove invasive biopsy requirements for veteran patients with a NASH/MASH diagnosis.



About **1 in 3 of Veterans** receiving VA primary care services have MASLD



NASH/MASH is a leading cause of liver transplant



The VA is **one of the only payers requiring biopsy** to receive NASH/MASH treatment

House Mil/Con Appropriations Report Language

“Reducing Health and Economic Burden of Chronic Liver Disease Among Veterans.—The health and economic burden of chronic liver disease is growing rapidly among veterans, fueled by the prevalence of obesity and related metabolic disorders. The Department mandates liver biopsy to confirm diagnosis of metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH) to authorize the use of new drug therapies. The Committee urges the Department to evaluate the impacts of therapy, including pharmaceutical and/or lifestyle measures, with the use of new, clinically validated, FDA-cleared, multiparametric MRI imaging solutions to diagnose, monitor, and improve management of veterans with MASH, while avoiding the need for biopsy in many patients.”

Senate Mil/Con Appropriations Report Language

“Liver Disease.—The Committee is aware that fatty liver disease is an increasing challenge for the Veterans Health System, with up to 30 percent of VA patients having this condition. About 70 percent of people with type 2 diabetes or who experience obesity have fatty liver disease. Therefore, the Committee encourages VA to take steps to increase efforts to screen, diagnose and treat veterans with fatty liver disease using non-invasive diagnostics and FDA-approved treatments, similar to Tricare for active-duty military, and provide a briefing to the Committee on these efforts.”

What does this mean?

The primary goal of the appropriations process is to encourage and influence the behavior of federal agencies based on congressional priorities. When report language is introduced into a specific committee's appropriations bill, it gives specific instructions and guidance on what these agencies, such as the VA, should do with the federal funds they have been allocated. By including language that prioritizes Veterans with MASH/NASH, these bills are, essentially, telling the VA that a priority of Congress and their constituents is to designate funds toward efforts to screen, diagnose, and treat these patients with fatty liver disease.

These bills must face hearings and markups by each Appropriations Committee prior to being brought and passed on the Floor.

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