

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 674

To require prompt responses from the heads of covered Federal agencies when the Secretary of Veterans Affairs requests information necessary to adjudicate claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 9, 2013

Mr. HELLER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require prompt responses from the heads of covered Federal agencies when the Secretary of Veterans Affairs requests information necessary to adjudicate claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Accountability for Vet-
5 erans Act of 2013”.

1 **SEC. 2. REQUIREMENT FOR PROMPT RESPONSES FROM**
2 **COVERED AGENCIES WHEN SECRETARY OF**
3 **VETERANS AFFAIRS REQUESTS INFORMA-**
4 **TION NECESSARY TO ADJUDICATE BENEFITS**
5 **CLAIMS.**

6 (a) INITIAL REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION.—When-
7 ever the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submits a request
8 to the head of a covered agency for information that the
9 Secretary determines is necessary to adjudicate a claim
10 for a benefit under a law administered by the Secretary,
11 the head of the covered agency shall, not later than 30
12 days after receiving the request from the Secretary—

13 (1) furnish the Secretary with the information
14 requested; or

15 (2) submit to the Secretary—

16 (A) an explanation as to why the head is
17 unable to furnish the Secretary with the re-
18 quested information within 30 days; and

19 (B) an estimate as to when the head will
20 furnish the Secretary with the requested infor-
21 mation.

22 (b) CONTINUOUS RESUBMITTAL OF REQUESTS.—In
23 each case in which the Secretary has submitted or resub-
24 mitted under this section a request to the head of a cov-
25 ered agency for information that the Secretary determines
26 is necessary to adjudicate a claim for a benefit under a

1 law administered by the Secretary, has received under this
 2 section in response to such request an estimate as to when
 3 the head will furnish the Secretary with the requested in-
 4 formation, has not received such information on or before
 5 the date that is 15 days after the estimated date, and still
 6 requires such information to adjudicate the claim, the Sec-
 7 retary shall resubmit such request and the head of the
 8 covered agency receiving such request shall, not later than
 9 30 days after receiving the resubmitted request from the
 10 Secretary—

11 (1) furnish the Secretary with the information
 12 requested; or

13 (2) submit to the Secretary—

14 (A) an explanation as to why the head has
 15 been unable to furnish the Secretary with the
 16 requested information; and

17 (B) an estimate as to when the head will
 18 furnish the Secretary with the requested infor-
 19 mation.

20 (c) NOTICE TO CLAIMANTS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Each time the Secretary re-
 22 ceives an explanation and a time estimate under
 23 subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) from the head of a cov-
 24 ered agency regarding information the Secretary re-
 25 quested to adjudicate a claim of a claimant, the Sec-

1 retary shall, not later than 45 days after the Sec-
2 retary submitted or resubmitted the request, notify
3 the claimant—

4 (A) that the Secretary requires information
5 from the covered agency to adjudicate the
6 claim;

7 (B) in the case of receiving a time estimate
8 under subsection (a)(2), that the covered agen-
9 cy was unable to furnish the information to the
10 Secretary within 30 days of the request for the
11 information;

12 (C) in the case of receiving a time estimate
13 under subsection (b)(2), that the covered agen-
14 cy was unable to furnish the information to the
15 Secretary before the previously estimated date;
16 and

17 (D) of the current estimate of the head of
18 the covered agency of the date by which the
19 head will furnish the Secretary with the infor-
20 mation requested.

21 (2) MANNER.—Notice provided under para-
22 graph (1) shall be made by mail or by electronic
23 means.

24 (d) RECORDS.—The Secretary shall keep records of
25 the time it takes to receive—

1 (1) responses from heads of covered agencies
2 under this section; and

3 (2) the information requested from the heads of
4 covered agencies under this section.

5 (e) SEMIANNUAL REPORTS.—Not less frequently
6 than once every six months, the Secretary shall submit
7 to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and
8 the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Rep-
9 resentatives a report that summarizes the records kept
10 under subsection (d) regarding the most recent six-month
11 period.

12 (f) COVERED AGENCY DEFINED.—In this section,
13 the term “covered agency” includes the following:

14 (1) The Department of Defense.

15 (2) The Social Security Administration.

16 (3) The National Archives and Records Admin-
17 istration.

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