

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 216

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a Future-Years Veterans Program and a quadrennial veterans review, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Chief Strategy Officer, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 8, 2015

Ms. BROWN of Florida (for herself and Mr. MILLER of Florida) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a Future-Years Veterans Program and a quadrennial veterans review, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Chief Strategy Officer, 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 “Department of Vet-
5 erans Affairs Budget Planning Reform Act of 2015”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANS TO IM-**
2 **PROVE PROGRAMS AND BENEFITS FOR VET-**
3 **ERANS.**

4 (a) FUTURE-YEARS VETERANS PROGRAM.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 38, United
6 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the
7 following new section:

8 **“§ 119. Future-Years Veterans Program**

9 “(a) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary
10 shall submit to Congress each year, at or about the time
11 that the President’s budget is submitted to Congress pur-
12 suant to section 1105(a) of title 31, a Future-Years Vet-
13 erans Program reflecting the estimated expenditures and
14 proposed appropriations included in that budget. Any such
15 Future-Years Veterans Program shall cover the fiscal year
16 with respect to which the budget is submitted and at least
17 the four succeeding fiscal years.

18 “(b) CONSISTENCY.—(1) The Secretary shall ensure
19 that amounts described in subparagraph (A) of paragraph
20 (2) for any fiscal year are consistent with amounts de-
21 scribed in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph for that
22 fiscal year.

23 “(2) Amounts referred to in paragraph (1) are the
24 following:

25 “(A) The amounts specified in program and
26 budget information submitted to Congress by the

1 Secretary in support of expenditure estimates and
2 proposed appropriations in the budget submitted to
3 Congress by the President under section 1105(a) of
4 title 31 for any fiscal year, as shown in the Future-
5 Years Veterans Program submitted pursuant to sub-
6 section (a).

7 “(B) The total amounts of estimated expendi-
8 tures and proposed appropriations necessary to sup-
9 port the programs, projects, and activities of the De-
10 partment of Veterans Affairs included pursuant to
11 paragraph (5) of section 1105(a) of title 31 in the
12 budget submitted to Congress under that section for
13 any fiscal year.

14 “(c) CONTENTS.—The Future-Years Veterans Pro-
15 gram under subsection (a) shall set forth the five-year
16 plan of the Department to address the commitment of the
17 United States to veterans and the resources necessary to
18 meet that commitment and shall be developed and up-
19 dated, as appropriate, annually by the Secretary. Each
20 Future-Years Veterans Program shall include an expla-
21 nation of—

22 “(1) the information that was used to develop
23 program planning guidance for the Future-Years
24 Veterans Program; and

1 “(2) how the resource allocations included in
2 the Future-Years Veterans Program correlate to
3 such five-year strategy.”.

4 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
5 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
6 by inserting after the item relating to section 118
7 the following new item:

“119. Future-Years Veterans Program.”.

8 (3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 119 of title 38,
9 United States Code, as added by paragraph (1),
10 shall apply with respect to the preparation and sub-
11 mission of the budget request for the Department of
12 Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal
13 years thereafter.

14 (b) QUADRENNIAL VETERANS REVIEW.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Such chapter is further
16 amended by adding after section 119, as added by
17 subsection (a)(1), the following new section:

18 **“§ 120. Quadrennial veterans review**

19 “(a) REQUIREMENT.—(1) Not later than fiscal year
20 2019, and every fourth year thereafter, the Secretary shall
21 conduct a review of the strategy for meeting the commit-
22 ment of the United States to veterans and the resources
23 necessary to meet that commitment (in this section re-
24 ferred to as a ‘quadrennial veterans review’).

1 “(2) Each quadrennial veterans review shall include
2 a comprehensive examination of the policies and strategies
3 of the United States with respect to veterans, including
4 recommendations regarding the long-term strategy and
5 priorities for programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
6 regarding veterans and guidance on the programs, assets,
7 capabilities, budget, policies, and authorities of the De-
8 partment.

9 “(3) The Secretary shall conduct each quadrennial
10 veterans review in consultation with key officials of the
11 Department, the heads of other Federal agencies, and
12 other relevant governmental and nongovernmental enti-
13 ties, including State, local, and tribal government officials,
14 members of Congress, veterans service organizations, pri-
15 vate sector representatives, academics, and other policy ex-
16 perts.

17 “(4) The Secretary shall ensure that each quadren-
18 nial veterans review is coordinated with the Future-Years
19 Veterans Program required under section 119 of this title.

20 “(b) CONTENTS OF REVIEW.—In each quadrennial
21 veterans review, the Secretary shall—

22 “(1) delineate a veterans strategy consistent
23 with the commitment of the United States to vet-
24 erans and refine a strategy for the types of, and pro-
25 vision of, programs, services, benefits, and outcomes

1 consistent with current authorities and require-
2 ments;

3 “(2) outline and prioritize the full range of pro-
4 grams and capabilities regarding veterans provided
5 by the Federal Government;

6 “(3) identify the budget plan required to pro-
7 vide sufficient resources to successfully execute the
8 full range of such programs and capabilities;

9 “(4) include an assessment of the organiza-
10 tional alignment of the Department with respect to
11 the strategy referred to in paragraph (1) and the
12 programs and capabilities referred to in paragraph
13 (2);

14 “(5) review and assess the effectiveness of the
15 mechanisms of the Department for executing the
16 process of turning the requirements identified in the
17 quadrennial veterans review into a plan to meet such
18 requirements, including an expenditure plan for the
19 Department; and

20 “(6) identify emerging trends, problems, oppor-
21 tunities, and issues that could affect veterans or the
22 Department during the ten-year period following the
23 period covered by the review.

24 “(c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—(1) The Secretary
25 shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of

1 the Senate and the House of Representatives a report re-
2 garding each quadrennial veterans review. The Secretary
3 shall submit the report in the year following the year in
4 which the review is conducted, but not later than the date
5 on which the President submits to Congress the budget
6 for the next fiscal year under section 1105 of title 31.

7 “(2) Each report submitted under paragraph (1)
8 shall include—

9 “(A) the results of the quadrennial veterans re-
10 view;

11 “(B) a description of the challenges to, and op-
12 portunities for, the assumed or defined veterans-re-
13 lated interests of the Nation that were examined for
14 the purposes of that review;

15 “(C) the strategy for meeting the Nation’s com-
16 mitment to veterans, including a prioritized list of
17 the missions of the Department;

18 “(D) a description of the interagency coopera-
19 tion, preparedness of Federal assets, infrastructure,
20 budget plan, and other elements of the programs
21 and policies of the Nation associated with the strat-
22 egy referred to in subsection (b)(1) that are required
23 to execute successfully the full range of programs
24 and capabilities identified in such strategy and the

1 programs and capabilities outlined under subsection
2 (b)(2);

3 “(E) an assessment of the organizational align-
4 ment of the Department with the strategy referred
5 to in subsection (b)(1) and the programs and capa-
6 bilities outlined under subsection (b)(2), including
7 the Department’s organizational structure, manage-
8 ment systems, budget and accounting systems,
9 human resources systems, procurement systems, and
10 physical and technical infrastructure;

11 “(F) a discussion of the status of cooperation
12 among Federal agencies in the effort to promote na-
13 tional support for veterans;

14 “(G) a discussion of the status of cooperation
15 between the Federal Government and State, local,
16 and tribal governments in supporting veterans and
17 providing programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
18 to assist veterans;

19 “(H) an explanation of any underlying assump-
20 tions used in conducting the review; and

21 “(I) any other matter the Secretary considers
22 appropriate.”.

23 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
24 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
25 by inserting after the item relating to section 119,

1 as added by subsection (a)(2), the following new
2 item:

“120. Quadrennial Veterans Review.”.

3 (c) POLICY GUIDANCE.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—Such chapter is further
5 amended by adding after section 120, as added by
6 subsection (b)(1), the following new section:

7 **“§ 121. Policy Guidance**

8 “The Secretary shall provide annually to the appro-
9 priate officials of the Department written policy guidance
10 for the preparation and review of the planning and pro-
11 gram recommendations and budget proposals of the ele-
12 ments of the Department of such officials. Such guidance
13 shall include guidance on the objectives of the Department
14 in accordance with Future-Years Veterans Program under
15 section 119 of this title and the quadrennial veterans re-
16 view under section 120 and the resource levels projected
17 to be available for the period of time for which such rec-
18 ommendations and proposals are to be effective.”.

19 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
20 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
21 by inserting after the item relating to section 120,
22 as added by subsection (b)(2), the following new
23 item:

“121. Quadrennial veterans review.”.

1 **SEC. 3. CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT**
2 **OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 38, United
4 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
5 lowing new section:

6 **“§ 323. Chief Strategy Officer**

7 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall designate
8 the Assistant Secretary whose functions include planning,
9 studies, and evaluations as the Chief Strategy Officer of
10 the Department. The Chief Strategy Officer shall advise
11 the Secretary on long-range strategy and implications.

12 “(b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Chief Strategy Officer
13 is the principal advisor to the Secretary and other senior
14 officials of the Department, and shall provide independent
15 analysis and advice to the Secretary and such officials.
16 The Chief Strategy Officer shall carry out the following
17 responsibilities:

18 “(1) Conducting cost estimation and cost anal-
19 ysis for the programs of the Department.

20 “(2) Establishing policies for, and overseeing
21 the integration of, the planning, programming,
22 budgeting and execution process for the Depart-
23 ment.

24 “(3) Providing analysis and advice on matters
25 relating to the planning and programming phase of
26 the planning, programming, budgeting and execution

1 process, and the preparation of materials and guid-
2 ance for such process, as directed by the Secretary,
3 working in coordination with the Assistant Secretary
4 for Management.

5 “(4) Developing and executing the Future-
6 Years Veterans Program of the Department, as
7 specified under section 119 of this title.

8 “(5) Developing resource discussions relating to
9 requirements under consideration in the quadrennial
10 veterans review under section 120 of this title.

11 “(6) Formulating study guidance for analysis of
12 alternatives for programs and initiatives, including
13 any necessary acquisitions, development, or procure-
14 ment commensurate with such alternatives, and per-
15 formance of such analysis as directed by the Sec-
16 retary.

17 “(7) Reviewing, analyzing, and evaluating pro-
18 grams for executing approved strategies and policies,
19 ensuring that information on programs and expected
20 outcomes is presented accurately and completely.

21 “(8) Ensuring that the costs of programs and
22 alternatives are presented accurately and completely
23 by assisting in establishing standards, policies, and
24 procedures for the conduct of cost estimation and
25 cost analysis throughout the Department, including

1 guidance relating to the proper selection of con-
2 fidence levels in cost estimates generally and for spe-
3 cific programs of the Department.

4 “(9) Conducting studies at the request of the
5 Secretary regarding costs, policy assumptions, and
6 strategic implications of current policies and possible
7 alternatives.

8 “(10) Communicating directly to the Secretary
9 and the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs about
10 matters for which the Chief Strategy Officer is re-
11 sponsible without obtaining the approval or concur-
12 rence of any other official within the Department.”.

13 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
14 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting
15 after the item relating to section 322 the following new
16 item:

“323. Chief Strategy Officer.”.

17 **SEC. 4. STUDY ON THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL**
18 **STRUCTURE OF THE OFFICE OF THE SEC-**
19 **RETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND OF THE**
20 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

21 (a) SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STUDY.—
22 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study
23 of the functions and organizational structure of the Office
24 of the Secretary and of the Department of Veterans Af-
25 fairs.

1 (b) CONTENTS OF STUDY.—In conducting the study
2 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall consider whether
3 the allocation of functions and the organizational struc-
4 ture of the Department, as of the date of the enactment
5 of this Act, constitute the most effective, efficient, and ec-
6 onomical allocation and structure to assist the Secretary
7 in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of the Sec-
8 retary. The Secretary shall also consider—

9 (1) whether the organization of the Office and
10 the Department is—

11 (A) optimally structured to assist the Sec-
12 retary in the effective exercise of control over
13 the Department, including—

14 (i) policy development and strategic
15 planning;

16 (ii) programming, planning, and budg-
17 et development and policy, program, and
18 budget execution; and

19 (iii) contingency planning; and

20 (B) the most effective and efficient organi-
21 zation for the initiation, development, and ar-
22 ticulation of veterans' policy and the provision
23 of benefits and services;

1 (2) means of improving and strengthening the
2 oversight and accountability within the Office and
3 Department;

4 (3) factors inhibiting efficient and effective exe-
5 cution of the functions of the Office and the Depart-
6 ment, including factors relating to—

7 (A) any duplication of functions (both
8 within and between the Office and Depart-
9 ment);

10 (B) the availability to the Secretary of suf-
11 ficient and detailed information regarding the
12 operation of the Department to enable effective
13 planning, policy execution, and oversight; and

14 (C) the sufficiency of resources, including
15 personnel, to carry out current and projected
16 requirements in a more effective and efficient
17 manner; and

18 (4) possible alternative allocations and realign-
19 ments of authorities and functions within the Office
20 and Department to improve the Department's over-
21 all operation and better provide benefits and serv-
22 ices.

23 (c) INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR STUDY.—The Sec-
24 retary shall seek to enter into a contract with an appro-
25 priate entity under which the entity shall carry out an

1 independent study of the same matters required to be con-
2 sidered by the Secretary under subsection (b). The Sec-
3 retary shall ensure that the entity has full access to such
4 information as the contractor requires in order to conduct
5 the study and that the contractor otherwise receives full
6 cooperation from all officials and entities of the Depart-
7 ment of Veterans Affairs.

8 (d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year
9 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
10 shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of
11 the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the
12 study of the Secretary under subsection (a). The report
13 shall include—

14 (1) the findings and conclusions of the Sec-
15 retary with respect to each of the matters set forth
16 in subsection (b);

17 (2) any recommendations of the Secretary for
18 organizational changes in the Office of the Secretary
19 and the overall Department and a description of the
20 means for implementing each recommendation; and

21 (3) a copy of the report of the independent con-
22 tractor under subsection (c), together with such
23 comments on such report as the Secretary considers
24 appropriate.

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