

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 216

---

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 25, 2015

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

---

## AN ACT

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”.

6 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANS TO IM-**  
7                   **PROVE PROGRAMS AND BENEFITS FOR VET-**  
8                   **ERANS.**

9       (a) FUTURE-YEARS VETERANS PROGRAM.—

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

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

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

23       “(b) CONSISTENCY.—(1) The Secretary shall ensure  
24 that amounts described in subparagraph (A) of paragraph  
25 (2) for any fiscal year are consistent with amounts de-

1 scribed in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph for that  
2 fiscal year.

3 “(2) Amounts referred to in paragraph (1) are the  
4 following:

5 “(A) The amounts specified in program and  
6 budget information submitted to Congress by the  
7 Secretary in support of expenditure estimates and  
8 proposed appropriations in the budget submitted to  
9 Congress by the President under section 1105(a) of  
10 title 31 for any fiscal year, as shown in the Future-  
11 Years Veterans Program submitted pursuant to sub-  
12 section (a).

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

20 “(c) CONTENTS.—The Future-Years Veterans Pro-  
21 gram under subsection (a) shall set forth the five-year  
22 plan of the Department to address the commitment of the  
23 United States to veterans and the resources necessary to  
24 meet that commitment and shall be developed and up-  
25 dated, as appropriate, annually by the Secretary. Each

1 Future-Years Veterans Program shall include an expla-  
2 nation of—

3 “(1) the information that was used to develop  
4 program planning guidance for the Future-Years  
5 Veterans Program; and

6 “(2) how the resource allocations included in  
7 the Future-Years Veterans Program correlate to  
8 such five-year strategy.

9 “(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on  
10 a publically accessible Internet website of the Department  
11 each Future-Years Veterans Program submitted pursuant  
12 to subsection (a).”.

13 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-  
14 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended  
15 by inserting after the item relating to section 118  
16 the following new item:

“119. Future-Years Veterans Program.”.

17 (3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 119 of title 38,  
18 United States Code, as added by paragraph (1),  
19 shall apply with respect to the preparation and sub-  
20 mission of the budget request for the Department of  
21 Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal  
22 years thereafter.

23 (b) QUADRENNIAL VETERANS REVIEW.—

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

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

5           “(a) REQUIREMENT.—(1) Not later than fiscal year  
6   2019, and every fourth year thereafter, the Secretary shall  
7   conduct a review of the strategy for meeting the commit-  
8   ment of the United States to veterans and the resources  
9   necessary to meet that commitment (in this section re-  
10   ferred to as a ‘quadrennial veterans review’).

11          “(2) Each quadrennial veterans review shall include  
12   a comprehensive examination of the policies and strategies  
13   of the United States with respect to veterans, including  
14   recommendations regarding the long-term strategy and  
15   priorities for programs, services, benefits, and outcomes  
16   regarding veterans and guidance on the programs, assets,  
17   capabilities, budget, policies, and authorities of the De-  
18   partment.

19          “(3) The Secretary shall conduct each quadrennial  
20   veterans review in consultation with key officials of the  
21   Department, the heads of other Federal agencies, and  
22   other relevant governmental and nongovernmental enti-  
23   ties, including State, local, and tribal government officials,  
24   members of Congress, veterans service organizations, pri-

1 vate sector representatives, academics, and other policy ex-  
2 perts.

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

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

8 “(1) delineate a veterans strategy consistent  
9 with the commitment of the United States to vet-  
10 erans and refine a strategy for the types of, and pro-  
11 vision of, programs, services, benefits, and outcomes  
12 consistent with current authorities and require-  
13 ments;

14 “(2) outline and prioritize the full range of pro-  
15 grams and capabilities regarding veterans provided  
16 by the Federal Government;

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

20 “(4) include an assessment of the organiza-  
21 tional alignment of the Department with respect to  
22 the strategy referred to in paragraph (1) and the  
23 programs and capabilities referred to in paragraph  
24 (2);

1           “(5) review and assess the effectiveness of the  
2 mechanisms of the Department for executing the  
3 process of turning the requirements identified in the  
4 quadrennial veterans review into a plan to meet such  
5 requirements, including an expenditure plan for the  
6 Department; and

7           “(6) identify emerging trends, problems, oppor-  
8 tunities, and issues that could affect veterans or the  
9 Department during the ten-year period following the  
10 period covered by the review.

11       “(c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—(1) The Secretary  
12 shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of  
13 the Senate and the House of Representatives a report re-  
14 garding each quadrennial veterans review. The Secretary  
15 shall submit the report in the year following the year in  
16 which the review is conducted, but not later than the date  
17 on which the President submits to Congress the budget  
18 for the next fiscal year under section 1105 of title 31.

19       “(2) Each report submitted under paragraph (1)  
20 shall include—

21           “(A) the results of the quadrennial veterans re-  
22 view;

23           “(B) a description of the challenges to, and op-  
24 portunities for, the assumed or defined veterans-re-

1       lated interests of the Nation that were examined for  
2       the purposes of that review;

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

6               “(D) a description of the interagency coopera-  
7       tion, preparedness of Federal assets, infrastructure,  
8       budget plan, and other elements of the programs  
9       and policies of the Nation associated with the strat-  
10      egy referred to in subsection (b)(1) that are required  
11      to execute successfully the full range of programs  
12      and capabilities identified in such strategy and the  
13      programs and capabilities outlined under subsection  
14      (b)(2);

15              “(E) an assessment of the organizational align-  
16      ment of the Department with the strategy referred  
17      to in subsection (b)(1) and the programs and capa-  
18      bilities outlined under subsection (b)(2), including  
19      the Department’s organizational structure, manage-  
20      ment systems, budget and accounting systems,  
21      human resources systems, procurement systems, and  
22      physical and technical infrastructure;

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

1           “(G) a discussion of the status of cooperation  
2           between the Federal Government and State, local,  
3           and tribal governments in supporting veterans and  
4           providing programs, services, benefits, and outcomes  
5           to assist veterans;

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

8           “(I) any other matter the Secretary considers  
9           appropriate.

10          “(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on  
11          a publically accessible Internet website of the Department  
12          each quadrennial veterans review submitted pursuant to  
13          subsection (c).

14          “(e) INDEPENDENT VETERANS REVIEW PANEL.—(1)  
15          Not later than February 1 of a year in which a quadren-  
16          nial veterans review is conducted under this section, the  
17          Secretary shall establish an independent panel to be  
18          known as the Independent Veterans Review Panel (in this  
19          subsection referred to as the ‘Panel’). The Panel shall  
20          have the duties set forth in this subsection.

21          “(2) The Panel shall be composed of 10 members who  
22          are recognized experts in matters relating to veterans. The  
23          members shall be appointed as follows:

24                  “(A) Two by the chairman of the Committee on  
25          Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives.

1           “(B) Two by the chairman of the Committee on  
2 Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate.

3           “(C) Two by the ranking member of the Com-  
4 mittee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Rep-  
5 resentatives.

6           “(D) Two by the ranking member of the Com-  
7 mittee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate.

8           “(E) Two by the Secretary, who shall serve as  
9 co-chairs of the panel.

10          “(3) Members shall be appointed for the life of the  
11 Panel. Any vacancy in the Panel shall be filled in the same  
12 manner as the original appointment.

13          “(4) The Panel shall have the following duties with  
14 respect to a quadrennial veterans review:

15           “(A) While the review is being conducted, the  
16 Panel shall review the updates from the Secretary  
17 required under paragraph (7) on the progress of the  
18 conduct of the review.

19           “(B) The Panel shall—

20           “(i) review the Secretary’s terms of ref-  
21 erence and any other materials providing the  
22 basis for, or substantial inputs to, the work of  
23 the Department of Veterans Affairs on the  
24 quadrennial veterans review;

1           “(ii) conduct an assessment of the assump-  
2           tions, strategy, findings, and risks included in  
3           the report on the quadrennial veterans review  
4           required in subsection (c);

5           “(iii) conduct an independent assessment  
6           of a variety of strategies for delivering services  
7           and support to veterans;

8           “(iv) review the resource requirements  
9           identified pursuant to subsection (b)(3) and, to  
10          the extent practicable, make a general compari-  
11          son to the resource requirements to support the  
12          strategies assessed under this subparagraph;  
13          and

14          “(v) provide to the Committees on Vet-  
15          erans’ Affairs of the Senate and the House of  
16          Representatives and the Secretary, through the  
17          report under paragraph (7), any recommenda-  
18          tions the Panel determines appropriate.

19          “(5) If the Secretary has not appointed members to  
20          the Panel under paragraph (2)(E) by February 1 of a year  
21          in which a quadrennial veterans review is conducted under  
22          this section, the Panel shall convene for its first meeting  
23          with the remaining members.

24          “(6) Not later than three months after the date on  
25          which the report on a quadrennial veterans review is sub-

1 mitted under subsection (c) to the Committees on Vet-  
2 erans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representa-  
3 tives, the Panel shall submit to such committees a report  
4 containing an assessment of the quadrennial veterans re-  
5 view, including a description of the items addressed under  
6 paragraph (4) with respect to that quadrennial veterans  
7 review.

8       “(7) Periodically, but not less often than every 60  
9 days during the life of the panel, or at the request of the  
10 co-chairs, the Secretary shall brief the Panel on the  
11 progress of the conduct of the quadrennial veterans re-  
12 view.

13       “(8)(A) The Panel may request directly from the De-  
14 partment such information as the Panel considers nec-  
15 essary to carry out its duties under this subsection. The  
16 Secretary shall cooperate with the Panel to ensure that  
17 information requested by the Panel under this subpara-  
18 graph is promptly provided to the maximum extent prac-  
19 tical.

20       “(B) Upon the request of the co-chairs, the Secretary  
21 shall make available to the Panel the services of any feder-  
22 ally funded research and development center that is cov-  
23 ered by a sponsoring agreement of the Department.

1 “(C) The Panel shall have the authorities provided  
2 in section 3161 of title 5 and shall be subject to the condi-  
3 tions set forth in such section.

4 “(D) Funds for activities of the Panel shall be pro-  
5 vided from amounts available to the Department.

6 “(9) The Panel shall terminate 45 days after the date  
7 on which the Panel submits the report on the quadrennial  
8 veterans review under paragraph (6).”.

9 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-  
10 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended  
11 by inserting after the item relating to section 119,  
12 as added by subsection (a)(2), the following new  
13 item:

“120. Quadrennial veterans review.”.

14 (c) POLICY GUIDANCE.—

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

18 **“§ 121. Policy guidance**

19 “The Secretary shall provide annually to the appro-  
20 priate officials of the Department written policy guidance  
21 for the preparation and review of the planning and pro-  
22 gram recommendations and budget proposals of the ele-  
23 ments of the Department of such officials. Such guidance  
24 shall include guidance on the objectives of the Department  
25 in accordance with Future-Years Veterans Program under

1 section 119 of this title and the quadrennial veterans re-  
2 view under section 120 and the resource levels projected  
3 to be available for the period of time for which such rec-  
4 ommendations and proposals are to be effective.”.

5 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-  
6 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended  
7 by inserting after the item relating to section 120,  
8 as added by subsection (b)(2), the following new  
9 item:

“121. Policy guidance.”.

10 **SEC. 3. CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT**  
11 **OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

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

15 **“§ 323. Chief Strategy Officer**

16 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall designate  
17 the Assistant Secretary whose functions include planning,  
18 studies, and evaluations as the Chief Strategy Officer of  
19 the Department. The Chief Strategy Officer shall advise  
20 the Secretary on long-range strategy and implications.

21 “(b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Chief Strategy Officer  
22 is the principal advisor to the Secretary and other senior  
23 officials of the Department, and shall provide independent  
24 analysis and advice to the Secretary and such officials.

1 The Chief Strategy Officer shall carry out the following  
2 responsibilities:

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

5           “(2) Establishing policies for, and overseeing  
6 the integration of, the planning, programming,  
7 budgeting and execution process for the Depart-  
8 ment.

9           “(3) Providing analysis and advice on matters  
10 relating to the planning and programming phase of  
11 the planning, programming, budgeting and execution  
12 process, and the preparation of materials and guid-  
13 ance for such process, as directed by the Secretary,  
14 working in coordination with the Assistant Secretary  
15 for Management.

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

19           “(5) Developing resource discussions relating to  
20 requirements under consideration in the quadrennial  
21 veterans review under section 120 of this title.

22           “(6) Formulating study guidance for analysis of  
23 alternatives for programs and initiatives, including  
24 any necessary acquisitions, development, or procure-  
25 ment commensurate with such alternatives, and per-

1 performance of such analysis as directed by the Sec-  
2 retary.

3 “(7) Reviewing, analyzing, and evaluating pro-  
4 grams for executing approved strategies and policies,  
5 ensuring that information on programs and expected  
6 outcomes is presented accurately and completely.

7 “(8) Ensuring that the costs of programs and  
8 alternatives are presented accurately and completely  
9 by assisting in establishing standards, policies, and  
10 procedures for the conduct of cost estimation and  
11 cost analysis throughout the Department, including  
12 guidance relating to the proper selection of con-  
13 fidence levels in cost estimates generally and for spe-  
14 cific programs of the Department.

15 “(9) Conducting studies at the request of the  
16 Secretary regarding costs, policy assumptions, and  
17 strategic implications of current policies and possible  
18 alternatives.

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

24 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections  
25 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting

1 after the item relating to section 322 the following new  
2 item:

“323. Chief Strategy Officer.”.

3 **SEC. 4. PROHIBITION ON NEW APPROPRIATIONS.**

4 No additional funds are authorized to be appro-  
5 priated to carry out this Act or the amendments made  
6 by this Act. This Act and such amendments shall be car-  
7 ried out using amounts otherwise available for the Depart-  
8 ment of Veterans Affairs.

Passed the House of Representatives March 24,  
2015.

Attest:

KAREN L. HAAS,  
*Clerk.*