

Union Calendar No. 31

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 216

[Report No. 114-48]

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

MARCH 23, 2015

Additional sponsors: Ms. KUSTER, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Mr. KILMER

MARCH 23, 2015

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on January 8, 2015]

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 Veterans*
5 *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 fol-*
12 *lowing new section:*

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

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

3 “(2) *Amounts referred to in paragraph (1) are the fol-*
4 *lowing:*

5 “(A) *The amounts specified in program and*
6 *budget information submitted to Congress by the Sec-*
7 *retary in support of expenditure estimates and pro-*
8 *posed appropriations in the budget submitted to Con-*
9 *gress by the President under section 1105(a) of title*
10 *31 for any fiscal year, as shown in the Future-Years*
11 *Veterans Program submitted pursuant to subsection*
12 *(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 Program*
21 *under subsection (a) shall set forth the five-year plan of the*
22 *Department to address the commitment of the United States*
23 *to veterans and the resources necessary to meet that commit-*
24 *ment and shall be developed and updated, as appropriate,*

1 *annually by the Secretary. Each Future-Years Veterans*
2 *Program shall include an explanation of—*

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

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

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

13 *(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-*
14 *tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended by*
15 *inserting after the item relating to section 118 the fol-*
16 *lowing 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), shall*
19 *apply with respect to the preparation and submission*
20 *of the budget request for the Department of Veterans*
21 *Affairs for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal years there-*
22 *after.*

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 nec-*
9 *essary to meet that commitment (in this section referred*
10 *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 rec-*
14 *ommendations regarding the long-term strategy and prior-*
15 *ities for programs, services, benefits, and outcomes regard-*
16 *ing veterans and guidance on the programs, assets, capa-*
17 *bilities, budget, policies, and authorities of the Department.*

18 “(3) *The Secretary shall conduct each quadrennial vet-*
19 *erans review in consultation with key officials of the De-*
20 *partment, the heads of other Federal agencies, and other rel-*
21 *evant governmental and nongovernmental entities, includ-*
22 *ing State, local, and tribal government officials, members*
23 *of Congress, veterans service organizations, private sector*
24 *representatives, academics, and other policy experts.*

1 “(4) *The Secretary shall ensure that each quadrennial*
2 *veterans review is coordinated with the Future-Years Vet-*
3 *erans Program required under section 119 of this title.*

4 “(b) *CONTENTS OF REVIEW.—In each quadrennial vet-*
5 *erans review, the Secretary shall—*

6 “(1) *delineate a veterans strategy consistent with*
7 *the commitment of the United States to veterans and*
8 *refine a strategy for the types of, and provision of,*
9 *programs, services, benefits, and outcomes consistent*
10 *with current authorities and requirements;*

11 “(2) *outline and prioritize the full range of pro-*
12 *grams and capabilities regarding veterans provided*
13 *by the Federal Government;*

14 “(3) *identify the budget plan required to provide*
15 *sufficient resources to successfully execute the full*
16 *range of such programs and capabilities;*

17 “(4) *include an assessment of the organizational*
18 *alignment of the Department with respect to the strat-*
19 *egy referred to in paragraph (1) and the programs*
20 *and capabilities referred to in paragraph (2);*

21 “(5) *review and assess the effectiveness of the*
22 *mechanisms of the Department for executing the proc-*
23 *ess of turning the requirements identified in the quad-*
24 *rennial veterans review into a plan to meet such re-*

1 *quirements, including an expenditure plan for the De-*
2 *partment; and*

3 *“(6) identify emerging trends, problems, oppor-*
4 *tunities, and issues that could affect veterans or the*
5 *Department during the ten-year period following the*
6 *period covered by the review.*

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

15 *“(2) Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall*
16 *include—*

17 *“(A) the results of the quadrennial veterans re-*
18 *view;*

19 *“(B) a description of the challenges to, and op-*
20 *portunities for, the assumed or defined veterans-re-*
21 *lated interests of the Nation that were examined for*
22 *the purposes of that review;*

23 *“(C) the strategy for meeting the Nation’s com-*
24 *mitment to veterans, including a prioritized list of*
25 *the missions of the Department;*

1 “(D) a description of the interagency coopera-
2 tion, preparedness of Federal assets, infrastructure,
3 budget plan, and other elements of the programs and
4 policies of the Nation associated with the strategy re-
5 ferred to in subsection (b)(1) that are required to exe-
6 cute successfully the full range of programs and capa-
7 bilities identified in such strategy and the programs
8 and capabilities outlined under subsection (b)(2);

9 “(E) an assessment of the organizational align-
10 ment of the Department with the strategy referred to
11 in subsection (b)(1) and the programs and capabili-
12 ties outlined under subsection (b)(2), including the
13 Department’s organizational structure, management
14 systems, budget and accounting systems, human re-
15 sources systems, procurement systems, and physical
16 and technical infrastructure;

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

20 “(G) a discussion of the status of cooperation be-
21 tween the Federal Government and State, local, and
22 tribal governments in supporting veterans and pro-
23 viding programs, services, benefits, and outcomes to
24 assist veterans;

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

3 “(I) any other matter the Secretary considers
4 appropriate.

5 “(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on a
6 publically accessible Internet website of the Department
7 each quadrennial veterans review submitted pursuant to
8 subsection (c).

9 “(e) INDEPENDENT VETERANS REVIEW PANEL.—(1)
10 Not later than February 1 of a year in which a quadrennial
11 veterans review is conducted under this section, the Sec-
12 retary shall establish an independent panel to be known as
13 the Independent Veterans Review Panel (in this subsection
14 referred to as the ‘Panel’). The Panel shall have the duties
15 set forth in this subsection.

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

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

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

23 “(C) Two by the ranking member of the Com-
24 mittee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Represent-
25 atives.

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

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

5 “(3) Members shall be appointed for the life of the
6 Panel. Any vacancy in the Panel shall be filled in the same
7 manner as the original appointment.

8 “(4) The Panel shall have the following duties with re-
9 spect to a quadrennial veterans review:

10 “(A) While the review is being conducted, the
11 Panel shall review the updates from the Secretary re-
12 quired under paragraph (7) on the progress of the
13 conduct of the review.

14 “(B) The Panel shall—

15 “(i) review the Secretary’s terms of reference
16 and any other materials providing the basis for,
17 or substantial inputs to, the work of the Depart-
18 ment of Veterans Affairs on the quadrennial vet-
19 erans review;

20 “(ii) conduct an assessment of the assump-
21 tions, strategy, findings, and risks included in
22 the report on the quadrennial veterans review re-
23 quired in subsection (c);

1 “(iii) conduct an independent assessment of
2 a variety of strategies for delivering services and
3 support to veterans;

4 “(iv) review the resource requirements iden-
5 tified pursuant to subsection (b)(3) and, to the
6 extent practicable, make a general comparison to
7 the resource requirements to support the strate-
8 gies assessed under this subparagraph; and

9 “(v) provide to the Committees on Veterans’
10 Affairs of the Senate and the House of Rep-
11 resentatives and the Secretary, through the re-
12 port under paragraph (7), any recommendations
13 the Panel determines appropriate.

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

19 “(6) Not later than three months after the date on
20 which the report on a quadrennial veterans review is sub-
21 mitted under subsection (c) to the Committees on Veterans’
22 Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the
23 Panel shall submit to such committees a report containing
24 an assessment of the quadrennial veterans review, including

1 *a description of the items addressed under paragraph (4)*
2 *with respect to that quadrennial veterans review.*

3 “(7) *Periodically, but not less often than every 60 days*
4 *during the life of the panel, or at the request of the co-chairs,*
5 *the Secretary shall brief the Panel on the progress of the*
6 *conduct of the quadrennial veterans review.*

7 “(8)(A) *The Panel may request directly from the De-*
8 *partment such information as the Panel considers necessary*
9 *to carry out its duties under this subsection. The Secretary*
10 *shall cooperate with the Panel to ensure that information*
11 *requested by the Panel under this subparagraph is promptly*
12 *provided to the maximum extent practical.*

13 “(B) *Upon the request of the co-chairs, the Secretary*
14 *shall make available to the Panel the services of any feder-*
15 *ally funded research and development center that is covered*
16 *by a sponsoring agreement of the Department.*

17 “(C) *The Panel shall have the authorities provided in*
18 *section 3161 of title 5 and shall be subject to the conditions*
19 *set forth in such section.*

20 “(D) *Funds for activities of the Panel shall be provided*
21 *from amounts available to the Department.*

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

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

“120. Quadrennial veterans review.”.

5 (c) *POLICY GUIDANCE.*—

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

9 **“§ 121. Policy guidance**

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

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

“121. Policy guidance.”.

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

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

6 **“§ 323. Chief Strategy Officer**

7 “(a) *IN GENERAL.*—The Secretary shall designate the
8 Assistant Secretary whose functions include planning, stud-
9 ies, and evaluations as the Chief Strategy Officer of the De-
10 partment. The Chief Strategy Officer shall advise the Sec-
11 retary 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. The
16 Chief Strategy Officer shall carry out the following respon-
17 sibilities:

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

20 “(2) *Establishing policies for, and overseeing the*
21 *integration of, the planning, programming, budgeting*
22 *and execution process for the Department.*

23 “(3) *Providing analysis and advice on matters*
24 *relating to the planning and programming phase of*
25 *the planning, programming, budgeting and execution*
26 *process, and the preparation of materials and guid-*

1 *ance for such process, as directed by the Secretary,*
2 *working in coordination with the Assistant Secretary*
3 *for Management.*

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

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

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

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

20 *“(8) Ensuring that the costs of programs and al-*
21 *ternatives are presented accurately and completely by*
22 *assisting in establishing standards, policies, and pro-*
23 *cedures for the conduct of cost estimation and cost*
24 *analysis throughout the Department, including guid-*
25 *ance relating to the proper selection of confidence lev-*

1 *els in cost estimates generally and for specific pro-*
2 *grams of the Department.*

3 *“(9) Conducting studies at the request of the Sec-*
4 *retary regarding costs, policy assumptions, and stra-*
5 *tegic implications of current policies and possible al-*
6 *ternatives.*

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

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

“323. Chief Strategy Officer.”.

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