

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4360

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 13, 2019

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

AN ACT

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the due process accorded veterans with respect to recovery of overpayments made by the Department and other amounts owed by veterans to the United States, to improve the processing of veterans benefits by the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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 “VA Overpayment Ac-
5 countability Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. REPAIR OF CREDIT.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 53 of title 38, United
8 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
9 lowing new section:

10 **“§ 5320. Correction of erroneous information sub-**
11 **mitted to consumer reporting agencies**

12 “(a) CORRECTING ERRORS BY THE DEPARTMENT.—
13 In any case in which the Secretary finds that the Depart-
14 ment has submitted erroneous information to a consumer
15 reporting agency about the indebtedness of any person
16 who has been determined by the Secretary to be indebted
17 to the United States by virtue of the participation of that
18 person in a benefits program administered by the Sec-
19 retary, the Secretary shall—

20 “(1) instruct the consumer reporting agency to
21 remove such erroneous information from the con-
22 sumer report of such person or take such other ac-
23 tion as may be required to ensure that such erro-
24 neous information is not included in the report of
25 such person; and

1 “(2) transmit to the consumer reporting agency
2 such information as the consumer reporting agency
3 may require to take such appropriate actions.

4 “(b) CORRECTING ERRORS BY DEBT COLLECTORS.—
5 In any case in which the Secretary finds that a debt col-
6 lector acting on behalf of the Department has submitted
7 erroneous information to a consumer reporting agency
8 about the indebtedness of any person who has been deter-
9 mined by the Secretary to be indebted to the United States
10 by virtue of the participation of that person in a benefits
11 program administered by the Secretary, the Secretary
12 shall instruct the debt collector to request the consumer
13 reporting agency remove such erroneous information from
14 the consumer report of such person or take such other
15 action as may be required to ensure such erroneous infor-
16 mation is not included in the report of such person.

17 “(c) NOTICE.—Not later than 60 days after the date
18 on which the Secretary issues an instruction under sub-
19 section (a)(1) or (b) with respect to a person, the Sec-
20 retary shall notify the person that the Secretary issued
21 such instruction.

22 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

23 “(1) The terms ‘consumer report’ and ‘con-
24 sumer reporting agency’ have the meanings given

1 such terms in section 603 of the Fair Credit Report-
2 ing Act (15 U.S.C. 1681a).

3 “(2) The term ‘debt collector’ has the meaning
4 given such term in section 803 of the Fair Debt Col-
5 lection Practices Act (15 U.S.C. 1692a).”.

6 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
7 at the beginning of chapter 53 of such title is amended
8 by adding at the end the following new item:

“5320. Correction of erroneous information submitted to consumer reporting
agencies.”.

9 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
10 this section shall take effect on the date of the enactment
11 of this Act and shall apply with respect to deductions
12 made under section 5314 of such title, administrative
13 costs under section 5315 of such title, and suits filed
14 under section 5316 of such title on or after such date.

15 **SEC. 3. IMPROVED PROCESSING OF BENEFITS BY DEPART-**
16 **MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

17 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall improve the
18 information technology of the Department of Veterans Af-
19 fairs (including the eBenefits system or successor system)
20 as may be necessary to achieve the following:

21 (1) NOTIFICATION OF DEBTS INCURRED.—The
22 Secretary shall provide a notification to a person
23 who—

1 (A) is entitled to a payment from the Sec-
2 retary under a benefits program administered
3 by the Secretary;

4 (B) incurs a debt to the United States
5 under that benefits program; and

6 (C) elects to receive such notifications.

7 (2) REVIEW OF INFORMATION REGARDING DE-
8 PENDENTS.—A person entitled to a payment from
9 the Secretary under a benefits program administered
10 by the Secretary may review information relating to
11 dependents of that person.

12 (3) TRACKING METRICS.—The Secretary shall
13 be able to track—

14 (A) the number and amount of payments
15 made by the Secretary to a person entitled to
16 a payment from the Secretary under a benefits
17 program administered by the Secretary who in-
18 curs a debt to the United States under such
19 program;

20 (B) the average debt to the United States
21 incurred by a person described in subparagraph
22 (A);

23 (C) how frequently the Secretary approves
24 and denies applications for relief under section
25 5302(a) of title 38, United States Code; and

1 (D) such other metrics the Secretary deter-
2 mines appropriate.

3 **SEC. 4. AUDIT OF ERRONEOUS PAYMENTS BY VETERANS**
4 **BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION; PLAN OF COR-**
5 **RECTION.**

6 (a) AUDIT.—Not later than 180 days after the date
7 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans
8 Affairs shall complete an audit to determine the following:

9 (1) The frequency by which the Department of
10 Veterans Affairs makes an error that results in a
11 payment to a person by virtue of such person's par-
12 ticipation in a benefits program administered by the
13 Secretary that such person is not entitled to or in
14 an amount that exceeds the amount to which the
15 person is entitled.

16 (2) Whether and to what degree vacant posi-
17 tions in the Veterans Benefits Administration affect
18 such frequency.

19 (b) PLAN.—Not later than 30 days after the comple-
20 tion of the audit under subsection (a), the Secretary of
21 Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Vet-
22 erans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives
23 a plan and description of resources necessary to align in-
24 formation technology systems to ensure that errors de-
25 scribed in subsection (a)(1) are not the result of commu-

- 1 nication or absence of communication between information
- 2 technology systems.

Passed the House of Representatives November 12,
2019.

Attest: CHERYL L. JOHNSON,
Clerk.