

(3) *TERMS AND CONDITIONS.*—A grant or cooperative agreement under this subsection shall be subject to such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be appropriate, including making data publically available and interoperable with other Federal datasets.

(e) *AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.*—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2020 through 2023.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Cantwell amendment at the desk be agreed to; that the committee-reported substitute amendment, as amended, be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2500) was agreed to, as follows

(Purpose: To improve the authorizations of appropriations)

Beginning on page 42, strike line 21 and all that follows through page 43, line 5, and insert the following:

(h) *FUNDING.*—For each of fiscal years 2021 and 2024—

(1) there is authorized out of funds appropriated to the United States Geological Survey, \$25,000,000 to carry out this section;

(2) there is authorized out of funds appropriated to the National Science Foundation, \$11,000,000 to carry out this section; and

(3) there is authorized out of funds appropriated to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, \$1,000,000 to carry out this section.

On page 51, strike lines 7 through 9 and insert the following:

(e) *FUNDING.*—For each of the fiscal years 2021 through 2024, there is authorized out of funds appropriated to the Secretary \$20,000,000 to carry out this section.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 529), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows

(The bill will be printed in a future edition of the RECORD.)

COORDINATED OCEAN OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH ACT OF 2019

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 318, S. 914.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 914) to reauthorize the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009, to clarify the authority of the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with respect to post-storm assessments, and to require the establishment of a National Water Center, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to proceeding to the measure?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee

on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask unanimous consent that the Wicker substitute amendment at the desk be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2501), in the nature of a substitute, was agreed to as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.)

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The bill (S. 914), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

HIGHLY RURAL VETERAN TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM EXTENSION ACT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 413, S. 850.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 850) to extend the authorization of appropriations to the Department of Veterans Affairs for purposes of awarding grants to veterans service organizations for the transportation of highly rural veterans.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, with an amendment as follows:

S. 850

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Highly Rural Veteran Transportation Program Extension Act".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION OF HIGHLY RURAL VETERANS.

Section 307(d) of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-163; 38 U.S.C. 1710 note) is amended by striking "2020" and inserting "2021".

SEC. 3. MAKING PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO TRANSPORT INDIVIDUALS TO AND FROM FACILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Section 111A(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (2); and

(2) in paragraph (1), by striking "(1)".

SEC. 4. MEDICAL EXAMINATION PROTOCOL FOR VOLUNTEER DRIVERS PARTICIPATING IN PROGRAM OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR VETERANS.

Section 111A(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting "(1)" before "The Secretary"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(2)(A) Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Highly Rural Veteran

Transportation Program Extension Act, the Secretary shall develop and establish a national protocol for the administration of medical examinations for volunteer drivers to participate in the program described in paragraph (1).

"(B) In developing the protocol required by subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall consult with such persons as the Secretary determines have an interest in the program described in paragraph (1).

"(C)(i) The Secretary shall implement the protocol by first conducting a one-year pilot program using the protocol.

"(ii) After conducting the pilot program required by clause (i), the Secretary shall assess the pilot program and make such changes to the protocol as the Secretary considers appropriate.

"(iii) After making changes to the protocol under clause (ii), the Secretary shall implement the protocol in phases during the course of one year."

SEC. 5. COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR VETERANS.

(a) *REPORT REQUIRED.*—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program the establishment of which was facilitated under section 111A(b) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) *CONTENTS.*—The report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A description of the program described in subsection (a), including descriptions of the following:

(A) The purpose of the program.

(B) The activities carried out under the program.

(2) An assessment of the sufficiency of the program with respect to the purpose of the program.

(3) An assessment of the cost effectiveness of the program in relation to alternatives.

(4) An assessment of the health benefits for veterans who have participated in the program.

(5) An assessment of the sufficiency of staffing of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs who are responsible for facilitating the maintenance of the program.

(6) An assessment, with respect to the purpose of the program, of the number of vehicles owned by and operating in conjunction with the program.

(7) An assessment of the awareness and usage of the program by veterans and their families.

(8) An assessment of other options for transportation under the program, such as local taxi companies and ridesharing programs such as Uber and Lyft.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask unanimous consent that the Sullivan amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; the committee-reported amendment, as amended, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2502) was agreed to as follows

(Purpose: To require a report by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the transportation of individuals to and from facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs)

Strike section 3 and insert the following:

SEC. 3. MAKING PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO TRANSPORT INDIVIDUALS TO AND FROM FACILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Section 111A(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

- (1) by striking paragraph (2); and
 (2) in paragraph (1), by striking “(1)”.

REPORT REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than five years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on cost savings, performance, and satisfaction of individuals, with respect to—

(A) the transport by the Secretary of individuals under subsection (a) of section 111A of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) the program the establishment of which was facilitated under subsection (b) of such section.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of the effect of emerging health care modalities, including telehealth and VA Video Connect, on—

(A) the transport of individuals described in paragraph (1)(A);

(B) the satisfaction of such individuals with services described in section 111A(a) of title 38, United States Code; and

(C) the program described in paragraph (1)(B).

(3) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

(A) TELEHEALTH.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The term “telehealth” means the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support and promote long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, public health, and health administration.

(ii) TECHNOLOGIES.—For purposes of clause (i), telecommunications technologies include videoconferencing, the internet, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless communications.

(B) VA VIDEO CONNECT.—The term “VA Video Connect” means the program of the Department of Veterans Affairs to connect veterans with their health care team from anywhere, using encryption to ensure a secure and private session.

(C) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Section 111A(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “veterans’ service organizations” and inserting “veterans service organizations”.

The committee-reported amendment, as amended, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 850), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 850

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Highly Rural Veteran Transportation Program Extension Act”.

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO MAKE GRANTS TO VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION OF HIGHLY RURAL VETERANS.

Section 307(d) of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 38 U.S.C. 1710 note) is amended by striking “2020” and inserting “2021”.

SEC. 3. MAKING PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO TRANSPORT INDIVIDUALS TO AND FROM FACILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 111A(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

- (1) by striking paragraph (2); and
 (2) in paragraph (1), by striking “(1)”.

REPORT REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than five years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on cost savings, performance, and satisfaction of individuals, with respect to—

(A) the transport by the Secretary of individuals under subsection (a) of section 111A of title 38, United States Code; and

(B) the program the establishment of which was facilitated under subsection (b) of such section.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include an assessment of the effect of emerging health care modalities, including telehealth and VA Video Connect, on—

(A) the transport of individuals described in paragraph (1)(A);

(B) the satisfaction of such individuals with services described in section 111A(a) of title 38, United States Code; and

(C) the program described in paragraph (1)(B).

(3) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

(A) TELEHEALTH.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The term “telehealth” means the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support and promote long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, public health, and health administration.

(ii) TECHNOLOGIES.—For purposes of clause (i), telecommunications technologies include videoconferencing, the internet, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless communications.

(B) VA VIDEO CONNECT.—The term “VA Video Connect” means the program of the Department of Veterans Affairs to connect veterans with their health care team from anywhere, using encryption to ensure a secure and private session.

(C) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Section 111A(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “veterans’ service organizations” and inserting “veterans service organizations”.

SEC. 4. MEDICAL EXAMINATION PROTOCOL FOR VOLUNTEER DRIVERS PARTICIPATING IN PROGRAM OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR VETERANS.

Section 111A(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting “(1)” before “The Secretary”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(2)(A) Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Highly Rural Veteran Transportation Program Extension Act, the Secretary shall develop and establish a national protocol for the administration of medical examinations for volunteer drivers to participate in the program described in paragraph (1).

“(B) In developing the protocol required by subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall consult with such persons as the Secretary determines have an interest in the program described in paragraph (1).

“(C)(i) The Secretary shall implement the protocol by first conducting a one-year pilot program using the protocol.

“(ii) After conducting the pilot program required by clause (i), the Secretary shall assess the pilot program and make such changes to the protocol as the Secretary considers appropriate.

“(iii) After making changes to the protocol under clause (ii), the Secretary shall implement the protocol in phases during the course of one year.”.

SEC. 5. COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR VETERANS.

(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this

Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program the establishment of which was facilitated under section 111A(b) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A description of the program described in subsection (a), including descriptions of the following:

(A) The purpose of the program.

(B) The activities carried out under the program.

(2) An assessment of the sufficiency of the program with respect to the purpose of the program.

(3) An assessment of the cost effectiveness of the program in relation to alternatives.

(4) An assessment of the health benefits for veterans who have participated in the program.

(5) An assessment of the sufficiency of staffing of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs who are responsible for facilitating the maintenance of the program.

(6) An assessment, with respect to the purpose of the program, of the number of vehicles owned by and operating in conjunction with the program.

(7) An assessment of the awareness and usage of the program by veterans and their families.

(8) An assessment of other options for transportation under the program, such as local taxi companies and ridesharing programs such as Uber and Lyft.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REFORM ACT OF 2019

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 423, S. 2336.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2336) to improve the management of information technology projects and investments of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 2336) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2336

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Reform Act of 2019”.

SEC. 2. MANAGEMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS.

(a) UPDATE OF REVIEW PROCESS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DASHBOARD CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER RATINGS.—