

Union Calendar No. 553

118TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 7150

[Report No. 118–657]

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve equitable access to certain benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to improve certain outreach to individuals who served uniformed services and dependents of such individuals, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 30, 2024

Mr. TAKANO introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

SEPTEMBER 10, 2024

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 *italie*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on January 30, 2024]

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve equitable access to certain benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to improve certain outreach to individuals who served uniformed services and dependents of such individuals, 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 “Survivor Benefits Deliv-*
 5 *ery Improvement Act of 2024”.*

6 **SEC. 2. EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CERTAIN BENEFITS OF DE-**
 7 **PARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR SUR-**
 8 **VIVORS OF VETERANS.**

9 *(a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the*
 10 *“Survivor Benefits Data Collection Act of 2024”.*

11 *(b) COLLECTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA.—*

12 *(1) COLLECTION.—Chapter 53 of title 38, United*
 13 *States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-*
 14 *lowing new section (and conforming the table of sec-*
 15 *tions at the beginning of such chapter accordingly):*

16 **“§ 5321. Demographic data of certain beneficiaries**

17 *“(a) COLLECTION.—The Secretary, in consultation*
 18 *with the entities described in subsection (b), shall—*

19 *“(1) develop a method to collect the demographic*
 20 *data of—*

21 *“(A) each covered survivor receiving de-*
 22 *pendency and indemnity compensation under*
 23 *chapter 13 of this title, pension under chapter 15*
 24 *of this title, or increased pension (or additional*
 25 *compensation or allowances) under this title*

1 *based on the need of regular aid and attendance*
 2 *or by reason of being permanently housebound;*
 3 *and*

4 “(B) *each person who receives burial bene-*
 5 *fits under chapter 23 of this title; and*

6 “(2) *collect demographic data pursuant to the*
 7 *method developed under paragraph (1).*

8 “(b) *ENTITIES FOR CONSULTATION.—The entities de-*
 9 *scribed in this subsection are the following:*

10 “(1) *The Advisory Committee on Minority Vet-*
 11 *erans established under section 544 of this title.*

12 “(2) *The Advisory Committee on Women Vet-*
 13 *erans established under section 542 of this title.*

14 “(3) *The Veterans’ Family, Caregiver, and Sur-*
 15 *vivor Advisory Committee of the Department of Vet-*
 16 *erans Affairs, or successor advisory committee.*

17 “(4) *Veterans service organizations.*

18 “(c) *DESIGNATION OF UNDERSERVED DEMO-*
 19 *GRAPHICS.—The Secretary shall—*

20 “(1) *designate as an underserved demographic*
 21 *any demographic the Secretary determines, taking*
 22 *into account the demographic data collected under*
 23 *subsection (a), is underserved with respect to the bene-*
 24 *fits specified in such subsection; and*

1 “(2) review such designations on at least a bien-
2 nial basis and update as appropriate.

3 “(d) *INCLUSION IN ANNUAL REPORTS.*—For each an-
4 nual benefits report of the Veterans Benefits Administra-
5 tion, the Secretary shall include as part of the report infor-
6 mation concerning the demographic data collected under
7 subsection (a) during the fiscal year covered by the report.

8 “(e) *EFFECT ON APPLICATION.*—Nothing in this sec-
9 tion shall be construed as requiring any person to submit
10 demographic data or as authorizing the Secretary to con-
11 sider whether a person submits demographic data in evalu-
12 ating any claim for benefits under the laws administered
13 by the Secretary.

14 “(f) *DEFINITIONS.*—In this section:

15 “(1) The term ‘covered survivor’ means a sur-
16 viving spouse, child, or parent of a veteran.

17 “(2) The term ‘demographic data’ includes—

18 “(A) with respect to an individual—

19 “(i) age;

20 “(ii) race;

21 “(iii) ethnicity;

22 “(iv) tribal affiliation, if any; and

23 “(v) geographic location; and

24 “(B) with respect to a covered survivor, the
25 cause of death of the applicable veteran.

1 “(3) *The term ‘veterans service organization’*
2 *means any organization recognized by the Secretary*
3 *under section 5902 of this title.’.*”

4 (2) *DEADLINES; APPLICABILITY.—*

5 (A) *DEADLINE FOR COLLECTION.—The Sec-*
6 *retary of Veterans Affairs shall develop the data*
7 *collection method under subsection (a) of section*
8 *5321 of title 38, United States Code (as added*
9 *by paragraph (1)), and commence the collection*
10 *of data pursuant to such method, by not later*
11 *than 1 year after the date of the enactment of*
12 *this Act.*

13 (B) *DEADLINE FOR INITIAL DESIGNA-*
14 *TIONS.—The Secretary shall make the initial*
15 *designation of any underserved demographics*
16 *under subsection (c) of such section 5321 by not*
17 *later than 180 days after the date on which the*
18 *Secretary commences the collection of data under*
19 *subsection (a) of such section.*

20 (C) *APPLICABILITY REGARDING ANNUAL RE-*
21 *PORTS.—The requirement under subsection (d) of*
22 *such section 5321 shall apply with respect to an-*
23 *ual benefits reports of the Veterans Benefits Ad-*
24 *ministration submitted on or after the date that*
25 *is one year after the date on which the Secretary*

1 *commences the collection of data under sub-*
2 *section (a) of such section.*

3 (c) *OUTREACH AND EDUCATION.*—

4 (1) *STRATEGY FOR UNDERSERVED DEMO-*
5 *GRAPHICS.*—*Not later than one year after the date of*
6 *initial designation, the Secretary shall develop and*
7 *submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the*
8 *Senate and House of Representatives an outreach and*
9 *education strategy for raising awareness regarding*
10 *the benefits specified in section 5321(a) of title 38,*
11 *United States Code (as added by subsection (b)),*
12 *among covered survivors who belong to an under-*
13 *served demographic.*

14 (2) *ELIGIBILITY OF VETERANS FOR CERTAIN*
15 *BURIAL BENEFITS.*—

16 (A) *OUTREACH PLAN.*—*Not later than 180*
17 *days after the date of initial designation, the*
18 *Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs shall de-*
19 *velop and submit to the Committees on Veterans'*
20 *Affairs of the House of Representatives and the*
21 *Senate an outreach strategy for raising aware-*
22 *ness regarding eligibility for burial in a na-*
23 *tional cemetery under section 2303 of title 38,*
24 *United States Code, among veterans and bene-*

1 *ficiaries who belong to an underserved demo-*
2 *graphic.*

3 (B) *EDUCATION ACTIVITIES.*—*The Under*
4 *Secretary shall carry out education activities*
5 *pursuant to the plan developed under subpara-*
6 *graph (A) to ensure that the veterans and bene-*
7 *ficiaries specified in such paragraph are made*
8 *aware of any eligibility specified in such sub-*
9 *paragraph.*

10 (C) *REPORTS.*—*Not later than one year*
11 *after the date of initial designation, and annu-*
12 *ally thereafter for five years, the Under Secretary*
13 *shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Af-*
14 *fairs of the House of Representatives and the*
15 *Senate a report on the efforts taken by the Under*
16 *Secretary pursuant to this paragraph.*

17 (3) *DEFINITIONS.*—*In this subsection:*

18 (A) *The term “covered survivor” has the*
19 *meanings given that term in section 5321(e) of*
20 *title 38, United States Code (as added by sub-*
21 *section (b)).*

22 (B) *The term “date of initial designation”*
23 *means the date on which the Secretary makes the*
24 *initial designation of any underserved demo-*
25 *graphics.*

1 (C) *The term “underserved demographic”*
2 *means a demographic designated as an under-*
3 *served demographic by the Secretary of Veterans*
4 *Affairs under section 5321(c) of title 38, United*
5 *States Code (as added by subsection (b)).*

6 (d) *ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY FOR OFFICE OF SUR-*
7 *VIVORS ASSISTANCE.—Not later than one year after the*
8 *date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall—*

9 (1) *conduct an assessment of the resources of the*
10 *Office of Survivors Assistance of the Department of*
11 *Veterans Affairs, or any successor office; and*

12 (2) *develop a strategy to ensure the availability*
13 *of resources necessary for the function of such office,*
14 *as determined by the Secretary as a result of the as-*
15 *essment.*

16 **SEC. 3. IMPROVEMENTS TO OUTREACH SERVICES PRO-**
17 **VIDED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**
18 **TO INDIVIDUALS WHO SERVED IN THE UNI-**
19 **FORMED SERVICES AND DEPENDENTS OF**
20 **SUCH INDIVIDUALS.**

21 (a) *SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the*
22 *“Survivor Solid Start Act of 2024”.*

23 (b) *EXPANSION OF OUTREACH SERVICES.—Sub-*
24 *chapter I of chapter 63 of title 38, United States Code, is*
25 *amended—*

1 (1) in section 6301(b)—

2 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (1)
3 through (3) as paragraphs (2) through (4), re-
4 spectively;

5 (B) by inserting before paragraph (2) (as so
6 redesignated) the following new paragraph:

7 “(1) the term ‘covered individual’ means—

8 “(A) a veteran; or

9 “(B) an individual who served in the uni-
10 formed services (as defined in section 1965(6) of
11 this title);”;

12 (C) in paragraph (2) (as so redesignated),
13 by striking “veterans” each place it appears and
14 inserting “covered individuals”; and

15 (D) in paragraph (4) (as so redesignated),
16 by striking “a person who served in the active
17 military, naval, air, or space service” and in-
18 serting “a covered individual”;

19 (2) in section 6302(b), by striking “eligible vet-
20 erans” each place it appears and inserting “covered
21 individuals”;

22 (3) in section 6303—

23 (A) in subsection (a), by striking “eligible
24 veterans” and inserting “covered individuals”;

1 *(B) in subsection (c)(1)(A), by striking “eli-*
 2 *gible veterans” and inserting “covered individ-*
 3 *uals”;*

4 *(C) in subsection (c)(2), by striking “vet-*
 5 *eran or dependent” each place it appears and*
 6 *inserting “covered individual or eligible depend-*
 7 *ent”;* and

8 *(D) in subsection (d), by striking “vet-*
 9 *erans” and inserting “covered individuals”;*
 10 *(4) in section 6306—*

11 *(A) in subsection (a), by striking “eligible*
 12 *veteran” and inserting “covered individual”;*
 13 *and*

14 *(B) in subsection (b)—*

15 *(i) by striking “opportunities for vet-*
 16 *erans” and inserting “opportunities for cov-*
 17 *ered individuals”;* and

18 *(ii) by striking “eligible veterans” and*
 19 *inserting “covered individuals”;* and

20 *(5) in section 6307, by adding at the end the fol-*
 21 *lowing new subsection:*

22 *“(c) OUTREACH SERVICES FOR SURVIVING ELIGIBLE*
 23 *DEPENDENTS.—(1)(A) Upon receipt of notification of the*
 24 *death of a covered individual, the Secretary, acting through*
 25 *the Under Secretary for Benefits, shall provide outreach*

1 services, by either mail, email, or telephone, to each eligible
2 dependent of such individual not less than once each quarter
3 calendar year until the eligible dependent files a claim for
4 a benefit under laws administered by the Secretary.

5 “(B) In the case of an eligible dependent described in
6 subparagraph (A) who is a minor child, the Secretary shall
7 provide such outreach services to the legal guardian of the
8 eligible dependent.

9 “(C) If the Secretary does not have the contact infor-
10 mation of an eligible dependent or legal guardian described
11 in subparagraph (A) or (B), the Secretary shall make rea-
12 sonable efforts to obtain such contact information to carry
13 out this subsection.

14 “(D) An eligible dependent or legal guardian described
15 in subparagraph (A) or (B) to whom the Secretary has pro-
16 vided outreach services under this subsection twice may
17 elect to not receive, or to receive fewer, outreach services
18 under this subsection. Not less than once each calendar year,
19 the Secretary shall notify each such eligible dependent or
20 legal guardian who has not made such an election of the
21 option to make such an election.

22 “(2) Outreach services under this subsection shall pro-
23 vide an eligible dependent with information including the
24 following:

1 “(A) *Contact information for the Office of Sur-*
2 *vivors Assistance established under section 321 of this*
3 *title.*

4 “(B) *Information regarding assistance in filing*
5 *a claim for a benefit under laws administered by the*
6 *Secretary furnished by—*

7 “(i) *a veterans service organization recog-*
8 *nized under section 5902 of this title; or*

9 “(ii) *an attorney, agent, or other entity rec-*
10 *ognized under section 5904 of this title.*

11 “(C) *How to find an entity—*

12 “(i) *described in clause (i) or (ii) of sub-*
13 *paragraph (B); and*

14 “(ii) *located near the residence of the eligi-*
15 *ble dependent.*

16 “(3) *In developing and revising materials used in out-*
17 *reach services under this subsection, the Secretary shall con-*
18 *sult with entities including the following:*

19 “(A) *Veterans service organizations recognized*
20 *under section 5902 of this title.*

21 “(B) *The Advisory Committee on Women Vet-*
22 *erans established under section 542 of this title.*

23 “(C) *The Advisory Committee on Minority Vet-*
24 *erans established under section 544 of this title.*

1 “(D) *The Veterans’ Family, Caregiver, and Sur-*
2 *vivor Advisory Committee of the Department, or suc-*
3 *cessor advisory committee.*

4 “(4) *The Secretary shall seek to ensure, to the extent*
5 *practicable, that materials used in outreach services by the*
6 *Pension and Fiduciary Service of the Veterans Benefits Ad-*
7 *ministration are in accordance with materials used by the*
8 *Under Secretary for Benefits to provide outreach services*
9 *under this subsection.”.*

10 (c) *PERSONNEL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs*
11 *shall establish at least 5, but not more than 10, full-time*
12 *equivalent positions at call centers of the Department of*
13 *Veterans Affairs to carry out subsection (c) of section 6307*
14 *of such title, as added by subsection (b).*

15 **SEC. 4. MODIFICATION OF CERTAIN HOUSING LOAN FEES.**

16 *The loan fee table in section 3729(b)(2) of title 38,*
17 *United States Code, is amended by striking “November 15,*
18 *2031” each place it appears and inserting “November 29,*
19 *2031”.*

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