

Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, HR. 216

(The amendment strikes all after the enacting clause and inserts a new text)

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 216

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

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 Vet-
5 erans Affairs Budget Planning Reform Act of 2015”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANS TO IM-**
2 **PROVE PROGRAMS AND BENEFITS FOR VET-**
3 **ERANS.**

4 (a) FUTURE-YEARS VETERANS PROGRAM.—

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

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

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

18 “(b) CONSISTENCY.—(1) The Secretary shall ensure
19 that amounts described in subparagraph (A) of paragraph
20 (2) for any fiscal year are consistent with amounts de-
21 scribed in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph for that
22 fiscal year.

23 “(2) Amounts referred to in paragraph (1) are the
24 following:

25 “(A) The amounts specified in program and
26 budget information submitted to Congress by the

1 Secretary in support of expenditure estimates and
2 proposed appropriations in the budget submitted to
3 Congress by the President under section 1105(a) of
4 title 31 for any fiscal year, as shown in the Future-
5 Years Veterans Program submitted pursuant to sub-
6 section (a).

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

14 “(c) CONTENTS.—The Future-Years Veterans Pro-
15 gram under subsection (a) shall set forth the five-year
16 plan of the Department to address the commitment of the
17 United States to veterans and the resources necessary to
18 meet that commitment and shall be developed and up-
19 dated, as appropriate, annually by the Secretary. Each
20 Future-Years Veterans Program shall include an expla-
21 nation of—

22 “(1) the information that was used to develop
23 program planning guidance for the Future-Years
24 Veterans Program; and

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

4 “(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on
5 a publically accessible Internet website of the Department
6 each Future-Years Veterans Program submitted pursuant
7 to subsection (a).”.

8 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
9 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
10 by inserting after the item relating to section 118
11 the following new item:

 “119. Future-Years Veterans Program.”.

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

18 (b) QUADRENNIAL VETERANS REVIEW.—

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

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

23 “(a) REQUIREMENT.—(1) Not later than fiscal year
24 2019, and every fourth year thereafter, the Secretary shall
25 conduct a review of the strategy for meeting the commit-

1 ment of the United States to veterans and the resources
2 necessary to meet that commitment (in this section re-
3 ferred to as a ‘quadrennial veterans review’).

4 “(2) Each quadrennial veterans review shall include
5 a comprehensive examination of the policies and strategies
6 of the United States with respect to veterans, including
7 recommendations regarding the long-term strategy and
8 priorities for programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
9 regarding veterans and guidance on the programs, assets,
10 capabilities, budget, policies, and authorities of the De-
11 partment.

12 “(3) The Secretary shall conduct each quadrennial
13 veterans review in consultation with key officials of the
14 Department, the heads of other Federal agencies, and
15 other relevant governmental and nongovernmental enti-
16 ties, including State, local, and tribal government officials,
17 members of Congress, veterans service organizations, pri-
18 vate sector representatives, academics, and other policy ex-
19 perts.

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

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

1 “(1) delineate a veterans strategy consistent
2 with the commitment of the United States to vet-
3 erans and refine a strategy for the types of, and pro-
4 vision of, programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
5 consistent with current authorities and require-
6 ments;

7 “(2) outline and prioritize the full range of pro-
8 grams and capabilities regarding veterans provided
9 by the Federal Government;

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

13 “(4) include an assessment of the organiza-
14 tional alignment of the Department with respect to
15 the strategy referred to in paragraph (1) and the
16 programs and capabilities referred to in paragraph
17 (2);

18 “(5) review and assess the effectiveness of the
19 mechanisms of the Department for executing the
20 process of turning the requirements identified in the
21 quadrennial veterans review into a plan to meet such
22 requirements, including an expenditure plan for the
23 Department; and

24 “(6) identify emerging trends, problems, oppor-
25 tunities, and issues that could affect veterans or the

1 Department during the ten-year period following the
2 period covered by the review.

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

11 “(2) Each report submitted under paragraph (1)
12 shall include—

13 “(A) the results of the quadrennial veterans re-
14 view;

15 “(B) a description of the challenges to, and op-
16 portunities for, the assumed or defined veterans-re-
17 lated interests of the Nation that were examined for
18 the purposes of that review;

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

22 “(D) a description of the interagency coopera-
23 tion, preparedness of Federal assets, infrastructure,
24 budget plan, and other elements of the programs
25 and policies of the Nation associated with the strat-

1 egy referred to in subsection (b)(1) that are required
2 to execute successfully the full range of programs
3 and capabilities identified in such strategy and the
4 programs and capabilities outlined under subsection
5 (b)(2);

6 “(E) an assessment of the organizational align-
7 ment of the Department with the strategy referred
8 to in subsection (b)(1) and the programs and capa-
9 bilities outlined under subsection (b)(2), including
10 the Department’s organizational structure, manage-
11 ment systems, budget and accounting systems,
12 human resources systems, procurement systems, and
13 physical and technical infrastructure;

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

17 “(G) a discussion of the status of cooperation
18 between the Federal Government and State, local,
19 and tribal governments in supporting veterans and
20 providing programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
21 to assist veterans;

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

24 “(I) any other matter the Secretary considers
25 appropriate.

1 “(d) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish on
2 a publically accessible Internet website of the Department
3 each quadrennial veterans review submitted pursuant to
4 subsection (c).

5 “(e) INDEPENDENT VETERANS REVIEW PANEL.—(1)
6 Not later than February 1 of a year in which a quadren-
7 nial veterans review is conducted under this section, the
8 Secretary shall establish an independent panel to be
9 known as the Independent Veterans Review Panel (in this
10 subsection referred to as the ‘Panel’). The Panel shall
11 have the duties set forth in this subsection.

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

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

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

19 “(C) Two by the ranking member of the Com-
20 mittee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Rep-
21 resentatives.

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

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

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

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

6 “(A) While the review is being conducted, the
7 Panel shall review the updates from the Secretary
8 required under paragraph (7) on the progress of the
9 conduct of the review.

10 “(B) The Panel shall—

11 “(i) review the Secretary’s terms of ref-
12 erence and any other materials providing the
13 basis for, or substantial inputs to, the work of
14 the Department of Veterans Affairs on the
15 quadrennial veterans review;

16 “(ii) conduct an assessment of the assump-
17 tions, strategy, findings, and risks included in
18 the report on the quadrennial veterans review
19 required in subsection (c);

20 “(iii) conduct an independent assessment
21 of a variety of strategies for delivering services
22 and support to veterans;

23 “(iv) review the resource requirements
24 identified pursuant to subsection (b)(3) and, to
25 the extent practicable, make a general compari-

1 son to the resource requirements to support the
2 strategies assessed under this subparagraph;
3 and

4 “(v) provide to the Committees on Vet-
5 erans’ Affairs of the Senate and the House of
6 Representatives and the Secretary, through the
7 report under paragraph (7), any recommenda-
8 tions the Panel determines appropriate.

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

14 “(6) Not later than three months after the date on
15 which the report on a quadrennial veterans review is sub-
16 mitted under subsection (c) to the Committees on Vet-
17 erans’ Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representa-
18 tives, the Panel shall submit to such committees a report
19 containing an assessment of the quadrennial veterans re-
20 view, including a description of the items addressed under
21 paragraph (4) with respect to that quadrennial veterans
22 review.

23 “(7) Periodically, but not less often than every 60
24 days during the life of the panel, or at the request of the
25 co-chairs, the Secretary shall brief the Panel on the

1 progress of the conduct of the quadrennial veterans re-
2 view.

3 “(8)(A) The Panel may request directly from the De-
4 partment such information as the Panel considers nec-
5 essary to carry out its duties under this subsection. The
6 Secretary shall cooperate with the Panel to ensure that
7 information requested by the Panel under this subpara-
8 graph is promptly provided to the maximum extent prac-
9 tical.

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

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

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

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

22 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
23 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
24 by inserting after the item relating to section 119,

1 as added by subsection (a)(2), the following new
2 item:

“120. Quadrennial veterans review.”.

3 (c) POLICY GUIDANCE.—

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

7 **“§ 121. Policy guidance**

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

19 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
20 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
21 by inserting after the item relating to section 120,
22 as added by subsection (b)(2), the following new
23 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
4 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
5 lowing new section:

6 **“§ 323. Chief Strategy Officer**

7 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall designate
8 the Assistant Secretary whose functions include planning,
9 studies, and evaluations as the Chief Strategy Officer of
10 the Department. The Chief Strategy Officer shall advise
11 the Secretary 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.
16 The Chief Strategy Officer shall carry out the following
17 responsibilities:

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

20 “(2) Establishing policies for, and overseeing
21 the integration of, the planning, programming,
22 budgeting and execution process for the Depart-
23 ment.

24 “(3) Providing analysis and advice on matters
25 relating to the planning and programming phase of
26 the planning, programming, budgeting and execution

1 process, and the preparation of materials and guid-
2 ance for such process, as directed by the Secretary,
3 working in coordination with the Assistant Secretary
4 for Management.

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

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

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

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

21 “(8) Ensuring that the costs of programs and
22 alternatives are presented accurately and completely
23 by assisting in establishing standards, policies, and
24 procedures for the conduct of cost estimation and
25 cost analysis throughout the Department, including

1 guidance relating to the proper selection of con-
2 fidence levels in cost estimates generally and for spe-
3 cific programs of the Department.

4 “(9) Conducting studies at the request of the
5 Secretary regarding costs, policy assumptions, and
6 strategic implications of current policies and possible
7 alternatives.

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

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

“323. Chief Strategy Officer.”.

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

18 No additional funds are authorized to be appro-
19 priated to carry out this Act or the amendments made
20 by this Act. This Act and such amendments shall be car-
21 ried out using amounts otherwise available for the Depart-
22 ment of Veterans Affairs.