

[DISCUSSION DRAFT]113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION**H. R.** _____

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

Mr. MICHAUD introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

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 2013”.

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 strategy of the Department regarding the nature of the
17 commitment of the United States to veterans and the re-
18 sources necessary to meet that commitment and shall be
19 developed and updated, as appropriate, annually by the
20 Secretary. Each Future-Years Veterans Program shall in-
21 clude an explanation 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 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
5 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
6 by inserting after the item relating to section 118
7 the following new item:

“119. Future-Years Veterans Program.”.

8 (3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 119 of title 38,
9 United States Code, as added by paragraph (1),
10 shall apply with respect to the preparation and sub-
11 mission of the fiscal year 2018 budget request for
12 the Department of Veterans Affairs.

13 (b) QUADRENNIAL VETERANS REVIEW.—

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

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

18 “(a) REQUIREMENT.—(1) During fiscal year 2017,
19 and every fourth year thereafter, the Secretary shall con-
20 duct a review of the nature of the commitment of the
21 United States to veterans and the resources necessary to
22 meet that commitment (in this section referred to as a
23 ‘quadrennial veterans review’).

24 “(2) Each quadrennial veterans review shall include
25 a comprehensive examination of the policies and strategies

1 of the United States with respect to veterans, including
2 recommendations regarding the long-term strategy and
3 priorities for programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
4 regarding veterans and guidance on the programs, assets,
5 capabilities, budget, policies, and authorities of the De-
6 partment.

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

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

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

20 “(1) delineate a veterans strategy consistent
21 with the commitment of the United States to vet-
22 erans and refine a strategy for the types of, and pro-
23 vision of, programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
24 consistent with current authorities and require-
25 ments;

1 “(2) outline and prioritize the full range of pro-
2 grams, services, benefits, and outcomes regarding
3 veterans provided by the Federal Government;

4 “(3) identify the budget plan required to pro-
5 vide sufficient resources to successfully execute the
6 full range of such programs, services, benefits, and
7 outcomes;

8 “(4) include an assessment of the organiza-
9 tional alignment of the Department with respect to
10 the strategy referred to in paragraph (1) and the
11 programs, services, benefits, and outcomes referred
12 to in paragraph (2);

13 “(5) review and assess the effectiveness of the
14 mechanisms of the Department for executing the
15 process of turning the requirements identified in the
16 quadrennial veterans review into a plan to meet such
17 requirements, including an expenditure plan for the
18 Department; and

19 “(6) identify emerging trends, problems, oppor-
20 tunities, and issues that could affect veterans or the
21 Department during the ten year period following the
22 period covered by the review.

23 “(c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—(1) The Secretary
24 shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of
25 the Senate and the House of Representatives a report re-

1 guarding each quadrennial veterans review. The Secretary
2 shall submit the report in the year following the year in
3 which the review is conducted, but not later than the date
4 on which the President submits the budget for the next
5 fiscal year to Congress under section 1105 of title 31,
6 United States Code.

7 “(2) Each report submitted under paragraph (1)
8 shall include—

9 “(A) the results of the quadrennial veterans re-
10 view;

11 “(B) a description of the challenges to, and op-
12 portunities for, the assumed or defined veterans-re-
13 lated interests of the Nation that were examined for
14 the purposes of that review;

15 “(C) the national strategy for meeting the Na-
16 tion’s commitment to veterans, including a
17 prioritized list of the critical relevant missions of the
18 Department;

19 “(D) a description of the interagency coopera-
20 tion, preparedness of Federal assets, infrastructure,
21 budget plan, and other elements of the programs
22 and policies of the Nation associated with the strat-
23 egy referred to in subsection (b)(1) that are required
24 to execute successfully the full range of programs,
25 services, benefits, and outcomes identified in such

1 strategy and the programs, services, benefits, and
2 outcomes outlined under subsection (b)(2);

3 “(E) an assessment of the organizational align-
4 ment of the Department with the strategy referred
5 to in subsection (b)(1) and the programs, services,
6 benefits, and outcomes outlined under subsection
7 (b)(2), including the Department’s organizational
8 structure, management systems, budget and ac-
9 counting systems, human resources systems, pro-
10 curement systems, and physical and technical infra-
11 structure;

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

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

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

22 “(I) any other matter the Secretary considers
23 appropriate.”.

24 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
25 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended

1 by inserting after the item relating to section 119,
2 as added by subsection (a)(2), the following new
3 item:

“120. Quadrennial Veterans Review”.

4 (c) POLICY GUIDANCE.—

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

8 **“§ 121. Policy Guidance**

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

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

“121. Quadrennial veterans review.”.

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 system 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 system, and the preparation of materials and guid-

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

4 “(4) Developing and executing the Future-
5 Years Veterans Program of the Department, as
6 specified 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
21 alternatives are presented accurately and completely
22 by assisting in establishing standards, policies, and
23 procedures for the conduct of cost estimation and
24 cost analysis throughout the Department, including
25 guidance relating to the proper selection of con-

1 fidence levels in cost estimates generally and for spe-
2 cific programs of the Department.

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

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
13 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting
14 after the item relating to section 322 the following new
15 item:

 “323.Chief Strategy Officer.”.

16 **SEC. 4. STUDY ON THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL**
17 **STRUCTURE OF THE OFFICE OF THE SEC-**
18 **RETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND OF THE**
19 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

20 (a) SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STUDY.—
21 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study
22 of the functions and organizational structure of the Office
23 of the Secretary and of the Department of Veterans Af-
24 fairs.

1 (b) CONTENTS OF STUDY.—In conducting the study
2 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall consider whether
3 the allocation of functions and the organizational struc-
4 ture of the Department, as of the date of the enactment
5 of this Act, constitute the most effective, efficient, and ec-
6 onomical allocation and structure to assist the Secretary
7 in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of the Sec-
8 retary. The Secretary shall also consider—

9 (1) whether the organization of the Office and
10 the Department is—

11 (A) optimally structured to assist the Sec-
12 retary in the effective exercise of control over
13 the Department, including—

14 (i) policy development and strategic
15 planning;

16 (ii) programming, planning, and budg-
17 et development and policy, program, and
18 budget execution; and

19 (iii) contingency planning; and

20 (B) the most effective and efficient organi-
21 zation for the initiation, development, and ar-
22 ticulation of veterans' policy and the provision
23 of benefits and services;

1 (2) means of improving and strengthening the
2 oversight and accountability within the Office and
3 Department;

4 (3) factors inhibiting efficient and effective exe-
5 cution of the functions of the Office and the Depart-
6 ment, including factors relating to—

7 (A) any duplication of functions (both
8 within and between the Office and Depart-
9 ment);

10 (B) the availability to the Secretary of suf-
11 ficient and detailed information regarding the
12 operation of the Department to enable effective
13 planning, policy execution, and oversight; and

14 (C) the sufficiency of resources, including
15 personnel, to carry out current and projected
16 requirements in a more effective and efficient
17 manner; and

18 (4) possible alternative allocations and realign-
19 ments of authorities and functions within the Office
20 and Department to improve the Department's over-
21 all operation and better provide benefits and serv-
22 ices.

23 (c) INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR STUDY.— The Sec-
24 retary shall enter into a contract with an appropriate enti-
25 ty under which the entity shall carry out an independent

1 study of the same matters required to be considered by
2 the Secretary under subsection (b). The Secretary shall
3 ensure that the entity has full access to such information
4 as the contractor requires in order to conduct the study
5 and that the contractor otherwise receives full cooperation
6 from all officials and entities of the Department of Vet-
7 erans Affairs.

8 (d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year
9 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
10 of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on
11 Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representa-
12 tives a report on the Secretary's study under subsection
13 (a). The report shall include—

14 (1) the findings and conclusions of the Sec-
15 retary with respect to each of the matters set forth
16 in subsection (b);

17 (2) any recommendations of the Secretary for
18 organizational changes in the Office of the Secretary
19 and the overall Department and a description of the
20 means for implementing each recommendation; and

21 (3) a copy of the report of the independent con-
22 tractor under subsection (c), together with such
23 comments on such report as the Secretary considers
24 appropriate.