

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Questions for the Record
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Legislative Hearing**

March 18, 2026

Questions for the Record from Representative Abraham Hamadeh:

In its written testimony, the Department claims to support Congressional oversight, yet warns this Committee against pursuing a comprehensive reauthorization strategy modeled on the NDAA process, characterizing it as “disruptive” to VA benefits and services and too resource-intensive. In plain terms, that is VA telling Congress that exercising Article I authority over programs spending hundreds of billions in taxpayer dollars is simply too much trouble.

Question 1: Why should this Committee accept internal administrative oversight as a substitute for Congressional authorization, when Congress’s role under Article I is to authorize, oversee, and fund Federal programs?

VA Response: VA is not suggesting that the Committee substitute internal administrative oversight for Congress’ Constitutional authorities.

VA experienced an interruption in several authorities last year when several expiring authorities lapsed. These authorities were subsequently extended by Congress. If all, or most, VA programs were subject to annual renewal, there would be a greater possibility that some programs could be negatively impacted.

To prevent negative impacts on Veteran health care and benefit programs, VA will continue to work with the Committee to provide any information the Committee requires to determine whether existing programs should continue or be modified.

Question 2: Is the Department’s position that Congress should defer its constitutional oversight authority to VA’s internal mechanisms? If not, what specifically does VA object to: oversight, accountability, or the possibility that Congress may change a status quo the Department finds comfortable?

VA Response: VA is not suggesting that the Committee substitute internal administrative oversight for Congress’ Constitutional authorities.

VA welcomes Congressional oversight and remains accountable to Congress through continuous authorization and oversight as evidenced by providing witnesses and submitting testimony at more than 40 oversight and legislative hearings during fiscal year (FY) 2025.

Question 3: VA's testimony specifically suggests that an annual authorization process, similar to the NDAA model used for the Department of Defense, could prove disruptive to VA benefits and services. Can the Department explain why regular Congressional authorization and oversight would be considered disruptive at VA, when that is the standard oversight framework for other major Federal departments and major national priorities?

VA Response: VA's health care and benefit programs are not structured in the same manner as those of the Department of War (DoW).

VA experienced an interruption in several authorities last year when several expiring authorities lapsed. These authorities were subsequently extended by Congress. If all, or most, VA programs were subject to annual renewal, there would be a greater possibility that some programs could be negatively impacted.

Further, DoW has operated subject to an annual authorization process for more than 60 years; DoW and Congress have developed the resources and processes to support this annual authorization program. Neither VA nor the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs have taken similar steps to be prepared to handle the work that an annual reauthorization process would entail.

Together, VA and Congress can conduct a comprehensive review of current law to identify opportunities to consolidate and simplify existing laws. Such an effort would benefit Veterans and other beneficiaries today by streamlining decisions and would provide a clear basis to identify gaps in VA's existing authority that should be addressed through subsequent legislation.

Question 4: Is VA suggesting that programs administering hundreds of billions in taxpayer funding should continue indefinitely without periodic Congressional authorization simply because the Department finds reauthorization inconvenient? If not, please articulate the Department's preferred oversight framework and cadence with specificity.

VA Response: VA welcomes Congressional oversight and accountability, including that of large-scale projects and programs. Congress, however, can exercise its oversight and accountability functions without subjecting all or most VA programs to an annual reauthorization process that could risk the delivery of benefits and health care to Veterans and other beneficiaries if Congress is unable to pass such legislation in a timely manner. VA remains ready to participate in Congressional hearings, briefings and meetings, respond to requests for information, and share reports and analysis of program impacts and outcomes for Veterans.

Question 5: VA's testimony states that Congress's interest in clearer accounting and better oversight could be achieved through "less disruptive and resource-intensive means," and that VA would welcome the opportunity to work with

Congress on reforming and simplifying existing law. What are those means? What statutory reauthorization framework does VA support, and what concrete proposal is VA offering this Committee instead of advising Congress on what not to do?

VA Response: The Committee requested VA provide the Administration's views on the bills included on the hearing agenda. VA expressed concerns about the motivation underlying some of the bills on the agenda that suggested a broader shift in how the Committee would conduct oversight and enact legislation affecting VA. VA stands ready to participate in Congressional hearings, briefings, and meetings, respond to requests for information, and share reports and analysis of program impacts and outcomes for Veterans.

VA recommends that the Department and Congress together conduct a comprehensive review of existing law to identify areas of overlap, conflict, and gaps in current authority. Given this type of effort has not been undertaken before, we recommend starting in one or two areas of law to also determine the best way of conducting such reviews; VA's testimony pointed to its health care authorities in chapter 17 and personnel authorities in chapter 74 as possible areas to begin. Once these reviews are completed, VA and Congress can determine what reforms are needed and work to enact those. Once the basic authorities are clarified and improved, VA and Congress will be in a position to clearly identify those programs or authorities that are of greatest concern and that might merit additional review or more frequent authorization. Such an effort will benefit Veterans and other beneficiaries today by streamlining decisions and provide a clear basis to identify gaps in VA's existing authority that should be addressed through subsequent legislation.

Question 6: VA's testimony acknowledges that eligibility rules, personnel authorities, and other provisions of Title 38 have become confusing and unnecessarily complicated, and that Congress and VA should work together to simplify them. If even VA concedes the law has become confusing for Veterans, VA staff, and the public, why is a structured Congressional reauthorization effort the wrong vehicle to address that? Please explain the Department's rationale for preferring piecemeal cleanup over a comprehensive authorization model.

VA Response: VA agrees that a close, collaborative review of current authorities would benefit Veterans, their families, Congress, and VA. As outlined in the previous response, VA believes that a focused review, for example concerning health care eligibility under chapter 17 or personnel authorities under chapter 74, could clarify and simplify these authorities. This work could also determine the best way to conduct such reviews to allow for examinations of other areas of law, while identifying specific programs or authorities that should be subject to additional review or more frequent authorization. Rather than beginning with a wholesale authorization project, VA recommends developing a process and methodology through focused reviews like those described above to ensure that critical but non-controversial programs are not interrupted while allowing VA to better support and serve Veterans and their families.

Together, VA and Congress can conduct a comprehensive review, leading to a consolidation and simplification of existing laws. Such an effort would benefit Veterans and other beneficiaries today by streamlining decisions and would provide a clear basis to identify gaps in VA's existing authority that should be addressed through subsequent legislation.

Question 7: H.R. 6861 would transfer DOL-VETS program to VA under a new Deputy Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition. Please provide the following for the record: (a) the current number of State Director of Veterans' Employment and Training (SDVET) positions and vacancies within those positions; and (b) the number of corrective action plans administered at the Department of Labor for failing to meet basic Veteran employment metrics, and the outcomes of those plans.

VA Response: VA does not administer, track, or maintain performance or accountability metrics for the Veterans' employment programs operated by the Department of Labor (DOL). Accordingly, VA is not in a position to provide authoritative responses to these questions. Because these programs reside under DOL-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) authority, DOL is best positioned to provide the requested data.

We respectfully refer the Committee to DOL for the information sought.

Question 8: If VA cannot currently track basic accountability metrics at the Department of Labor for Veterans' employment programs, why should Congress believe VA can coordinate more effectively with another Department than it could if it managed the programs directly under its own authority?

VA Response: VA does not collect or manage the performance or accountability metrics associated with Veterans' employment programs administered by DOL because these programs fall entirely under DOL-VETS authority. VA does not have access to the underlying data referenced in the question. VA's inability to report on another Department's internal metrics should not be interpreted as a limitation on VA's ability to coordinate across Federal departments.

VA tracks program outcomes for the Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program. In FY 2025, VR&E delivered record-setting performance across every major measure. The program completed 126,960 entitlement determinations, 55,301 Veterans began new rehabilitation programs, and 83,188 Veterans continued in their previously established programs. During the same period, VR&E supported 21,773 Veterans in becoming job-ready and achieved 19,372 successful program completions—the highest in program history. This includes a record 10,527 Veterans who secured employment. These outcomes reflect significant progress in preparing Veterans for long-term career success, stability, and economic independence.

Question 9: The Department's testimony claims that transferring Veterans' employment programs from DOL to VA would fragment coordination and disrupt existing services. Based on the Department's inside experience, is there duplication or overlap within the services provided by VA and DOL-VETS? If the Department maintains there is no material duplication, please identify a single successful inter-agency Veterans employment outcome that would have been impossible had all those programs resided under one roof at VA.

VA Response: While both VA and DOL-VETS provide employment services to Veterans, the programs complement, rather than duplicate, each other by leveraging distinct statutory authorities.

VA's VR&E program is a specialized benefit designed for Veterans who have service-connected disabilities that create an employment handicap and who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Eligibility generally includes a service-connected disability rating and, in most cases, is subject to statutory time limits.

In contrast, the DOL-VETS Jobs for Veterans State Grants program is a required partner of DOL's American Job Centers and provides broader employment services to Veterans with significant barriers to employment. These criteria go beyond VA's VR&E eligibility requirements, enabling more Veterans and other eligible individuals to access employment assistance.

While this response will not provide a specific success story, there is an interagency documented process for collaboration between VA and DOL-VETS. VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment Manual, M28C.IV.B.1.08.d, directs VR&E counselors to explore alternative resources, such as job placement assistance through the local DOL American Job Center, when Veterans are not entitled to chapter 31 services, ensuring a warm hand-off to DOL-VETS support. A referral process is detailed in the Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) for State Workforce Agency Services to VR&E Participants (Veterans Program Letter 01-26 TAG) attached to the VA-DOL Memorandum of Understanding, which specifies procedures for consent, information sharing, and coordination.

Question 10: Under the current framework, when the inter-agency system fails a Veteran seeking employment services, who is accountable? VA points to Labor; Labor points back to VA. The Veteran receives paperwork, referrals, and excuses. Please describe the specific chain of accountability that exists today when a Veteran falls through the cracks between agencies, including the name and title of the single official responsible for that Veteran's outcome.

VA Response: Both VA and DOL would be accountable. VA is accountable for its rehabilitation services, and DOL is accountable for its workforce programs.

The current chain of command in VA as it pertains to accountability of the VR&E program is as follows: field employees are accountable to their division leader, a VR&E

Officer (VREO). VREOs report to Regional Office Directors, who are accountable to District Directors. The districts report to the Deputy Under Secretary for Field Operations, who reports to the Under Secretary for Benefits, who reports to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Question 11: We have heard that the VA will become the lead agency for Federal government procurement of nitrile gloves. Do you have a timeline or an estimated date for the release of the RFP?

VA Response: The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) is leading a working group to organize Governmentwide demand for nitrile gloves to provide US manufacturers with a consistent demand signal to stabilize production and ensure a steady supply of in the event of a national emergency nitrile gloves. VA is participating on the working group to standardize requirements and establish a single procurement vehicle. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the lead for this initiative utilizing an existing DHS contract by the end of summer that source gloves from US manufacturers. VA plans to use the DHS contract as its source for nitrile medical exam gloves.

Question 12: Will an RFI be issued prior to the RFP?

VA Response: VA does not plan to issue an RFP; it intends to use an existing DHS contract. However, VA issued an RFI seeking domestic manufacturing capability for nitrile gloves. VA also published a special notice (Notice ID 36C24126Q0050) on December 22, 2025, announcing an industry day in Greenwood Village, Colorado, on January 8, 2026. VA conducted follow-up market research in February 2026 with the manufacturers who attended the industry day and has provided that information to OFPP and other Federal agencies participating on the working group and has been working with DHS to ensure the consolidated procurement vehicle meets its needs. This RFI was a separate effort and not directly related to the DHS procurement vehicle. For information regarding the DHS procurement vehicle, please refer to DHS.

Question 13: Will the solicitation be limited to glove manufacturers, excluding distributors and specialty organizations?

VA Response: VA will take advantage of an existing DHS contract that provides access to multiple domestic manufacturers of nitrile gloves that meet the requirements of the Make PPE in America Act. DHS is the lead for this initiative; questions regarding the procurement vehicle should be referred to DHS.

Question 14: What type of contract do you anticipate: LPTA, FFP, CPFF, or something else?

VA Response: DHS is the lead for this initiative; questions regarding the procurement vehicle should be referred to DHS.

Department of Veterans Affairs
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