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(Original Signature of Member)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the staffing, transparency, and accountability of the law enforcement operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Miss RICE of New York introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the staffing, transparency, and accountability of the law enforcement operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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 “VA Police Improve-
5 ment and Accountability Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENTS TO TRANSPARENCY OF LAW EN-**
2 **FORCEMENT OPERATIONS OF DEPARTMENT**
3 **OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

4 (a) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—Section 902 of
5 title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the
6 end the following new subsection:

7 “(e)(1) The Secretary shall publish on the internet
8 website of each facility of the Department the following
9 information with respect to the facility:

10 “(A) Summaries and statistics covering the pre-
11 vious five-year period regarding—

12 “(i) arrests made by and tickets issued by
13 Department police officers;

14 “(ii) prosecutions, ticketing, and other ac-
15 tions relating to such arrests;

16 “(iii) the use of force and weapons dis-
17 charge by Department police officers; and

18 “(iv) complaints, investigations, and dis-
19 ciplinary actions regarding Department police
20 officers.

21 “(B) Contact information for employees of the
22 Department and the public to directly contact the
23 police force of the facility, including for an indi-
24 vidual (or the representative, attorney, or authorized
25 agent of the individual) to request information re-
26 garding the arrest, ticketing, detainment, use of

1 force, or other police matters pertaining to that indi-
2 vidual.

3 “(2) The Secretary shall ensure that each police force
4 of a facility of the Department is able to provide to an
5 individual who contacts the police force pursuant to para-
6 graph (1)(B) the information described in such para-
7 graph.”.

8 (b) USE OF BODY WORN CAMERAS BY DEPARTMENT
9 POLICE OFFICERS.—

10 (1) REQUIREMENT.—Subsection (a) of such
11 section 902 is amended by adding at the end the fol-
12 lowing new paragraph:

13 “(3) Beginning not later than 180 days after the date
14 of the enactment of this paragraph, the Secretary shall
15 require Department police officers to use cameras worn
16 on the individual police officer’s person that record and
17 store audio and video (commonly known as ‘body worn
18 cameras’).”.

19 (2) GUIDANCE.—Not later than one year after
20 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
21 shall issue, and make publicly available, guidance on
22 the use of body worn cameras by Department police
23 officers pursuant to section 902(a)(3) of title 38,
24 United States Code, as amended by paragraph (1).

1 (3) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall issue
2 the guidance under paragraph (2) in consultation
3 with veterans service organizations, civil rights orga-
4 nizations, law enforcement organizations, law en-
5 forcement accreditation organizations, privacy rights
6 organizations, and other relevant organizations or
7 experts.

8 (c) DATA AND REPORTING ON POLICE INCIDENTS.—
9 Section 902 of title 38, United States Code, as amended
10 by subsection (a), is further amended by adding at the
11 end the following new subsection:

12 “(f) POLICE INCIDENTS.—(1)(A) The Secretary shall
13 track and analyze the following information regarding the
14 police force of the Department:

15 “(i) Arrests made by and tickets
16 issued by Department police officers.

17 “(ii) Prosecutions, ticketing, and
18 other actions relating to such arrests.

19 “(iii) The use of force and weapons
20 discharge.

21 “(iv) Complaints, investigations, and
22 disciplinary actions.

23 “(B) The Secretary shall carry out subparagraph (A)
24 by implementing one or more Department-wide data sys-
25 tems.

1 “(2)(A) Beginning not later than one year after the
2 date of the enactment of this subsection, the Secretary
3 shall ensure that each incident described in subparagraph
4 (C) is promptly reported to the Assistant Secretary with
5 responsibility for operations, preparedness, security, and
6 law enforcement functions.

7 “(B) The Assistant Secretary shall, in a timely man-
8 ner—

9 “(i) review each incident described in subpara-
10 graph (C)(i) that is reported under subparagraph
11 (A); and

12 “(ii) investigate each incident described in sub-
13 paragraph (C)(ii) that is reported under subpara-
14 graph (A).

15 “(C) An incident described in this subparagraph is
16 either of the following:

17 “(i) An incident, including an allegation, of the
18 use of force by a Department police officer.

19 “(ii) An incident, including an allegation, of the
20 use of force by a Department police officer that re-
21 sults in any person receiving medical attention.”.

22 (d) PLAN ON POLICE STAFFING.—The Secretary
23 shall develop a plan that establishes minimum standards
24 for police staffing at each facility of the Department, in-
25 cluding with respect to—

1 (1) the number of Department police officers
2 assigned to each facility; and

3 (2) the pay grades for such officers.

4 (e) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than
5 one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
6 Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Af-
7 fairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a
8 report on the implementation of this section and the
9 amendments made by this section. The report shall include
10 the following:

11 (1) With respect to the staffing needs of the
12 Department police force—

13 (A) identification of the amount of turn-
14 over among Department police officers;

15 (B) how the compensation for Department
16 police officers affects such turnover;

17 (C) a comparison of such compensation
18 with the compensation provided to specialty po-
19 lice units, such as police units at medical facili-
20 ties and other police units in the same locality
21 pay area; and

22 (D) the plan developed under subsection
23 (d), including—

24 (i) estimates on the costs to carry out
25 the plan; and

1 (ii) any recommendations for legisla-
2 tive actions required to carry out the plan.

3 (2) With respect to body worn cameras, a re-
4 view of the implementation and use of body worn
5 cameras by Department police officers, including
6 under pilot programs carried out by the Secretary
7 during the five-year period preceding the date of the
8 report.

9 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 (1) The term “body worn camera” means a
11 camera worn on an individual police officer’s person
12 that records and stores audio and video.

13 (2) The term “Department police officer”
14 means an employee of the Department of Veterans
15 Affairs described in section 902(a) of title 38,
16 United States Code.