

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7150

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

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 De-
5 livery Improvement Act of 2024”.

1 **SEC. 2. EQUITABLE ACCESS TO CERTAIN BENEFITS OF DE-**
2 **PARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR SUR-**
3 **VIVORS OF VETERANS.**

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

6 (b) COLLECTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA.—

7 (1) COLLECTION.—Chapter 53 of title 38,
8 United States Code, is amended by adding at the
9 end the following new section (and conforming the
10 table of sections at the beginning of such chapter ac-
11 cordingly):

12 **“§ 5321. Demographic data of certain beneficiaries**

13 “(a) COLLECTION.—The Secretary, in consultation
14 with the entities described in subsection (b), shall—

15 “(1) develop a method to collect the demo-
16 graphic data of—

17 “(A) each covered survivor receiving dis-
18 ability and indemnity compensation under chap-
19 ter 13 of this title, pension under chapter 15 of
20 this title, or increased pension (or additional
21 compensation or allowances) under this title
22 based on the need of regular aid and attend-
23 ance or by reason of being permanently house-
24 bound; and

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

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

3 “(b) ENTITIES FOR CONSULTATION.—The entities
4 described in this subsection are the following:

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

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

9 “(3) The Veterans’ Family, Caregiver, and Sur-
10 vivor Advisory Committee of the Department of Vet-
11 erans Affairs, or successor advisory committee.

12 “(4) Veterans service organizations.

13 “(c) DESIGNATION OF UNDERSERVED DEMO-
14 GRAPHICS.—The Secretary shall—

15 “(1) designate as an underserved demographic
16 any demographic the Secretary determines, taking
17 into account the demographic data collected under
18 subsection (a), is underserved with respect to the
19 benefits specified in such subsection; and

20 “(2) review such designations on at least a bi-
21 ennial basis and update as appropriate.

22 “(d) INCLUSION IN ANNUAL REPORTS.—For each
23 annual benefits report of the Veterans Benefits Adminis-
24 tration, the Secretary shall include as part of the report
25 information concerning the demographic data collected

1 under subsection (a) during the fiscal year covered by the
2 report.

3 “(e) EFFECT ON APPLICATION.—Nothing in this sec-
4 tion shall be construed as requiring any person to submit
5 demographic data or as authorizing the Secretary to con-
6 sider whether a person submits demographic data in eval-
7 uating any claim for benefits under the laws administered
8 by the Secretary.

9 “(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

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

12 “(2) The term ‘demographic data’ includes,
13 with respect to an individual, the following:

14 “(A) Race.

15 “(B) Ethnicity.

16 “(C) Tribal affiliation, if any.

17 “(D) LGBTQIA+ status.

18 “(E) Geographic location.

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

22 (2) DEADLINES; APPLICABILITY.—

23 (A) DEADLINE FOR COLLECTION.—The
24 Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop the
25 data collection method under subsection (a) of

1 section 5321 of title 38, United States Code (as
2 added by paragraph (1)), and commence the
3 collection of data pursuant to such method, by
4 not later than 180 days after the date of the
5 enactment of this Act.

6 (B) DEADLINE FOR INITIAL DESIGNA-
7 TIONS.—The Secretary shall make the initial
8 designation of any underserved demographics
9 under subsection (c) of such section 5321 by
10 not later than one year after the date on which
11 the Secretary commences the collection of data
12 under subsection (a) of such section.

13 (C) APPLICABILITY REGARDING ANNUAL
14 REPORTS.—The requirement under subsection
15 (d) of such section 5321 shall apply with re-
16 spect to annual benefits reports of the Veterans
17 Benefits Administration submitted on or after
18 the date that is one year after the date on
19 which the Secretary commences the collection of
20 data under subsection (a) of such section.

21 (c) OUTREACH AND EDUCATION.—

22 (1) STRATEGY FOR UNDERSERVED DEMO-
23 GRAPHICS.—Not later than one year after the date
24 of initial designation, the Secretary shall develop and
25 submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of

1 the Senate and House of Representatives an out-
2 reach and education strategy for raising awareness
3 regarding the benefits specified in section 5321(a) of
4 title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection
5 (b)), among covered survivors who belong to an un-
6 derserved demographic.

7 (2) ELIGIBILITY OF VETERANS FOR CERTAIN
8 BURIAL BENEFITS.—

9 (A) OUTREACH PLAN.—Not later than 180
10 days after the date of initial designation, the
11 Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs shall de-
12 velop and submit to the Committees on Vet-
13 erans' Affairs of the House of Representatives
14 and the Senate an outreach strategy for raising
15 awareness regarding eligibility for burial in a
16 national cemetery under section 2303 of title
17 38, United States Code, among veterans and
18 beneficiaries who belong to an underserved de-
19 mographic.

20 (B) EDUCATION ACTIVITIES.—The Under
21 Secretary shall carry out education activities
22 pursuant to the plan developed under subpara-
23 graph (A) to ensure that the veterans and bene-
24 ficiaries specified in such paragraph are made

1 aware of any eligibility specified in such sub-
2 paragraph.

3 (C) REPORTS.—Not later than one year
4 after the date of initial designation, and annu-
5 ally thereafter for five years, the Under Sec-
6 retary shall submit to the Committees on Vet-
7 erans' Affairs of the House of Representatives
8 and the Senate a report on the efforts taken by
9 the Under Secretary pursuant to this para-
10 graph.

11 (3) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

12 (A) The term “covered survivor” has the
13 meanings given that term in section 5321(e) of
14 title 38, United States Code (as added by sub-
15 section (b)).

16 (B) The term “date of initial designation”
17 means the date on which the Secretary makes
18 the initial designation of any underserved demo-
19 graphics.

20 (C) The term “underserved demographic”
21 means a demographic designated as an under-
22 served demographic by the Secretary of Vet-
23 erans Affairs under section 5321(c) of title 38,
24 United States Code (as added by subsection
25 (b)).

1 (d) ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY FOR OFFICE OF
2 SURVIVORS ASSISTANCE.—Not later than one year after
3 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
4 shall—

5 (1) conduct an assessment of the resources of
6 the Office of Survivors Assistance of the Department
7 of Veterans Affairs, or any successor office; and

8 (2) develop a strategy to ensure the availability
9 of resources necessary for the function of such of-
10 fice, as determined by the Secretary as a result of
11 the assessment.

12 **SEC. 3. IMPROVEMENTS TO OUTREACH SERVICES PRO-**
13 **VIDED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AF-**
14 **FAIRS TO INDIVIDUALS WHO SERVED IN THE**
15 **UNIFORMED SERVICES AND DEPENDENTS OF**
16 **SUCH INDIVIDUALS.**

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

19 (b) EXPANSION OF OUTREACH SERVICES.—Sub-
20 chapter I of chapter 63 of title 38, United States Code,
21 is amended—

22 (1) in section 6301(b)—

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

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

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

4 “(A) a veteran; or

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

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

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

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

18 (3) in section 6303—

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

21 (B) in subsection (c)(1)(A), by striking
22 “eligible veterans” and inserting “covered indi-
23 viduals”;

24 (C) in subsection (c)(2), by striking “vet-
25 eran or dependent” each place it appears and

1 inserting “covered individual or eligible depend-
2 ent”; and

3 (D) in subsection (d), by striking “vet-
4 erans” and inserting “covered individuals”;

5 (4) in section 6306—

6 (A) in subsection (a), by striking “eligible
7 veteran” and inserting “covered individual”;
8 and

9 (B) in subsection (b)—

10 (i) by striking “opportunities for vet-
11 erans” and inserting “opportunities for
12 covered individuals”;

13 (ii) by striking “eligible veterans” and
14 inserting “covered individuals”; and

15 (5) in section 6307, by adding at the end the
16 following new subsection:

17 “(c) OUTREACH SERVICES FOR SURVIVING ELIGIBLE
18 DEPENDENTS.—(1)(A) Upon receipt of notification of the
19 death of a covered individual, the Secretary, acting
20 through the Under Secretary for Benefits, shall provide
21 outreach services, by mail, email, and telephone, to each
22 eligible dependent of such individual not less than once
23 each quarter calendar year until the eligible dependent
24 files a claim for a benefit under laws administered by the
25 Secretary.

1 “(B) In the case of an eligible dependent described
2 in subparagraph (A) who is a minor child, the Secretary
3 shall provide such outreach services to the legal guardian
4 of the eligible dependent.

5 “(C) If the Secretary does not have the contact infor-
6 mation of an eligible dependent or legal guardian de-
7 scribed in subparagraph (A) or (B), the Secretary shall
8 make reasonable efforts to obtain such contact informa-
9 tion to carry out this subsection.

10 “(D) An eligible dependent or legal guardian de-
11 scribed in subparagraph (A) or (B) may elect to not re-
12 ceive, or to receive fewer, outreach services under this sub-
13 section. Not less than once each calendar year, the Sec-
14 retary shall notify each such eligible dependent or legal
15 guardian of the option to make such an election.

16 “(2) Outreach services under this subsection shall
17 provide an eligible dependent with information including
18 the following:

19 “(A) Contact information for the Office of Sur-
20 vivors Assistance established under section 321 of
21 this title.

22 “(B) Information regarding assistance in filing
23 a claim for a benefit under laws administered by the
24 Secretary furnished by—

1 “(i) a veterans service organization recog-
2 nized under section 5902 of this title; or

3 “(ii) an attorney, agent, or other entity
4 recognized under section 5904 of this title.

5 “(C) How to find an entity—

6 “(i) described in clause (i) or (ii) of sub-
7 paragraph (B); and

8 “(ii) located near the residence of the eligi-
9 ble dependent.

10 “(3) In developing and revising materials used in out-
11 reach services under this subsection, the Secretary shall
12 consult with entities including the following:

13 “(A) Veterans service organizations recognized
14 under section 5902 of this title.

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

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

19 “(D) The Veterans’ Family, Caregiver, and
20 Survivor Advisory Committee of the Department, or
21 successor advisory committee.”.

22 (c) PERSONNEL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
23 shall establish at least 5, but not more than 10, full-time
24 equivalent positions at call centers of the Department of

- 1 Veterans Affairs to carry out subsection (c) of section
- 2 6307 of such title, as added by subsection (b).

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