

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO S. 114
OFFERED BY M . _____

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
3 “VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017”.

4 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
5 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—APPROPRIATION OF AMOUNTS FOR VETERANS CHOICE
PROGRAM

Sec. 101. Appropriation of amounts for Veterans Choice Program.

TITLE II—PERSONNEL MATTERS

Sec. 201. Modification to annual determination of staffing shortages in Veterans Health Administration.

Sec. 202. Establishment of Department of Veterans Affairs Executive Management Fellowship Program.

Sec. 203. Accountability of leaders for managing the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 204. Reemployment of former employees at Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 205. Promotional opportunities for technical experts at Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 206. Employment of students and recent graduates by Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 207. Encouragement of transition of military medical professionals into employment with Veterans Health Administration.

Sec. 208. Recruiting database at Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 209. Training for human resources professionals of Veterans Health Administration on recruitment and retention.

Sec. 210. Plan to hire directors of medical centers of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 211. Exit surveys at Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 212. Requirement that physician assistants employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs receive competitive pay.

Sec. 213. Expansion of direct-hiring authority for Department of Veterans Affairs in case of shortage of highly qualified candidates.

Sec. 214. Comptroller General of the United States assessment of succession planning at Department of Veterans Affairs.

TITLE III—MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES

Sec. 301. Authorization of certain major medical facility leases of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 302. Authorization of appropriations for medical facility leases.

TITLE IV—OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 401. Extension of reduction in amount of pension furnished by Department of Veterans Affairs for certain veterans covered by medicaid plans for services furnished by nursing facilities.

Sec. 402. Extension of requirement for collection of fees for housing loans guaranteed by Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 403. Extension of authority to use income information.

1 **TITLE I—APPROPRIATION OF**
2 **AMOUNTS FOR VETERANS**
3 **CHOICE PROGRAM**

4 **SEC. 101. APPROPRIATION OF AMOUNTS FOR VETERANS**
5 **CHOICE PROGRAM.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appro-
7 priated, and is appropriated, to the Secretary of Veterans
8 Affairs, out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise
9 appropriated, \$2,100,000,000 to be deposited in the Vet-
10 erans Choice Fund under section 802 of the Veterans Ac-
11 cess, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law
12 113–146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note).

13 (b) AVAILABILITY.—The amount appropriated under
14 subsection (a) shall remain available until expended.

1 **TITLE II—PERSONNEL MATTERS**

2 **SEC. 201. MODIFICATION TO ANNUAL DETERMINATION OF**
3 **STAFFING SHORTAGES IN VETERANS HEALTH**
4 **ADMINISTRATION.**

5 Section 7412(a) of title 38, United States Code, is
6 amended—

7 (1) by striking “the five occupations” and in-
8 sserting “at a minimum, the five clinical occupations
9 and the five nonclinical occupations”; and

10 (2) by striking “throughout the Department”
11 and inserting “with respect to each medical center of
12 the Department,”.

13 **SEC. 202. ESTABLISHMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS**
14 **AFFAIRS EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT FELLOW-**
15 **SHIP PROGRAM.**

16 (a) FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.—Chapter 7 of title 38,
17 United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the
18 following new subchapter:

19 “SUBCHAPTER III—EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT
20 FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

21 “§ 741. **Executive Management Fellowship Program**

22 “(a) FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.—There is in the De-
23 partment an Executive Management Fellowship Program.

24 The purpose of the program shall be to provide—

1 “(1) eligible employees of the Veterans Benefits
2 Administration and the Veterans Health Administra-
3 tion with training and experience in the private sec-
4 tor; and

5 “(2) eligible employees of a private-sector entity
6 with training and experience in the Department of
7 Veterans Affairs.

8 “(b) FELLOWSHIP.—(1) A fellowship provided under
9 this section is a 1-year fellowship during which—

10 “(A) with respect to a Department participant,
11 the participant receives training and experience at a
12 private-sector entity that is engaged in the adminis-
13 tration and delivery of health care or other services
14 similar to the benefits administered by the Sec-
15 retary; and

16 “(B) with respect to a private-sector partici-
17 pant, the participant receives training and experi-
18 ence at the Veterans Benefits Administration or the
19 Veterans Health Administration.

20 “(2) The Secretary shall enter into such agreements
21 with private-sector entities as are necessary to carry out
22 this section.

23 “(c) SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.—(1) In August of
24 each year, the Secretary shall select—

1 “(A) not fewer than 18 and not more than 30
2 eligible employees of the Veterans Benefits Adminis-
3 tration and the Veterans Health Administration to
4 receive a fellowship under this section; and

5 “(B) not fewer than 18 and not more than 30
6 eligible employees of private-sector entities to receive
7 a fellowship under this section.

8 “(2) To the extent practicable, the Secretary shall se-
9 lect eligible employees under subparagraphs (A) and (B)
10 of paragraph (1) from among eligible employees who are
11 veterans in a manner that is reflective of the demographics
12 of the veteran population of the United States and that
13 whenever practicable provides a preference to such em-
14 ployees who represent or service rural areas.

15 “(d) ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES.—For the purposes of
16 this section, an eligible employee is—

17 “(1) with respect to an employee of the Vet-
18 erans Benefits Administration or the Veterans
19 Health Administration, an employee who—

20 “(A) is compensated at a rate of basic pay
21 not less than the minimum rate of basic pay
22 payable for grade GS-14 of the General Sched-
23 ule and not more than either the minimum rate
24 of basic pay payable to a member of the Senior
25 Executive Service under section 5382 of title 5

1 or the minimum rate of basic pay payable pur-
2 suant to chapter 74 of this title, as the case
3 may be;

4 “(B) enters into an agreement with the
5 Secretary under subsection (e); and

6 “(C) submits to the Secretary an applica-
7 tion containing such information and assur-
8 ances as the Secretary may require; and

9 “(2) with respect to an employee of a private-
10 sector entity, an employee who—

11 “(A) is employed in a position whose du-
12 ties and responsibilities are commensurate with
13 an employee of the Department described in
14 paragraph (1);

15 “(B) enters into an agreement with the
16 Secretary under subsection (e); and

17 “(C) submits to the Secretary an applica-
18 tion containing such information and assur-
19 ances as the Secretary may require.

20 “(e) AGREEMENTS.—(1) An agreement between the
21 Secretary and a Department participant shall be in writ-
22 ing, shall be signed by the participant, and shall include
23 the following provisions:

24 “(A) The Secretary’s agreement to provide the
25 participant with a fellowship under this section;

1 “(B) The participant’s agreement—

2 “(i) to accept the fellowship;

3 “(ii) after completion of the fellowship, to
4 serve as a full-time employee in the Veterans
5 Benefits Administration or the Veterans Health
6 Administration for at least 2 years as specified
7 in the agreement; and

8 “(iii) that, during the 2-year period begin-
9 ning on the last day of the fellowship, the par-
10 ticipant will not accept employment in the same
11 industry as the industry of the private-sector
12 entity at which the participant accepts the fel-
13 lowship.

14 “(C) A provision that any financial obligation of
15 the United States arising out of an agreement en-
16 tered into under this subchapter, and any obligation
17 of the participant which is conditioned on such
18 agreement, is contingent upon funds being appro-
19 priated.

20 “(D) A statement of the damages to which the
21 United States is entitled under this subchapter for
22 the participant’s breach of the agreement.

23 “(E) Such other terms as the Secretary deter-
24 mines are required to be included in the agreement.

1 “(2) An agreement between the Secretary and a pri-
2 vate-sector participant shall be in writing, shall be signed
3 by the participant, and shall include the following provi-
4 sions:

5 “(A) The Secretary’s agreement to provide the
6 participant with a fellowship under this section.

7 “(B) The participant’s agreement to accept the
8 fellowship.

9 “(C) Such other terms as the Secretary deter-
10 mines are required to be included in the agreement.

11 “(f) TREATMENT OF RECIPIENTS.—(1) A Depart-
12 ment participant shall be considered an employee of the
13 Department for all purposes, including for purposes of re-
14 ceiving a salary and benefits, and shall remain eligible for
15 all promotion and incentive programs otherwise available
16 to such an employee.

17 “(2) A private-sector participant shall be considered
18 an employee of the private-sector entity that employs the
19 participant for all purposes, including for purposes of re-
20 ceiving a salary and benefits, and during the fellowship
21 shall be treated as a contractor of the Department.

22 “(g) REPORTS.—(1) Not later than 60 days after
23 completing a fellowship under this section, a recipient of
24 the fellowship shall submit to the Secretary a report on
25 the fellowship.

1 “(2) Each such report shall describe the duties of the
2 recipient during the fellowship and any recommendations
3 of the recipient for the application by the Secretary of in-
4 dustry processes, technologies, and best practices.

5 “(3) Not later than 7 days after receiving each such
6 report, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on
7 Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representa-
8 tives such report without change.

9 “(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

10 “(1) The term ‘Department participant’ means
11 an employee of the Veterans Benefits Administration
12 or the Veterans Health Administration who is par-
13 ticipating in the fellowship under this section.

14 “(2) The term ‘private-sector entity’ includes
15 an entity operating under a public-private partner-
16 ship.

17 “(3) The term ‘private-sector participant’
18 means an employee of a private-sector entity who is
19 participating in the fellowship under this section.”.

20 (b) DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later
21 than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act,
22 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement the Ex-
23 ecutive Management Fellowship Program required under
24 section 741 of title 38, United States Code, as added by
25 subsection (a).

1 (c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
2 at the beginning of chapter 7 of title 38, United States
3 Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new
4 items:

“SUBCHAPTER III—EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

“741. Executive Management Fellowship Program.”.

5 **SEC. 203. ACCOUNTABILITY OF LEADERS FOR MANAGING**
6 **THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 of title
8 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end
9 the following new section:

10 **“§ 725. Annual performance plan for political ap-**
11 **pointees**

12 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct an
13 annual performance plan for each political appointee of
14 the Department that is similar to the annual performance
15 plan conducted for an employee of the Department who
16 is appointed as a career appointee (as that term is defined
17 in section 3132(a) of title 5) within the Senior Executive
18 Service at the Department.

19 “(b) ELEMENTS OF PLAN.—Each annual perform-
20 ance plan conducted under subsection (a) with respect to
21 a political appointee of the Department shall include an
22 assessment of whether the appointee is meeting the fol-
23 lowing goals:

1 “(1) Recruiting, selecting, and retaining well-
2 qualified individuals for employment at the Depart-
3 ment.

4 “(2) Engaging and motivating employees.

5 “(3) Training and developing employees and
6 preparing those employees for future leadership roles
7 within the Department.

8 “(4) Holding each employee of the Department
9 that is a manager accountable for addressing issues
10 relating to performance, in particular issues relating
11 to the performance of employees that report to the
12 manager.

13 “(c) DEFINITION OF POLITICAL APPOINTEE.—In
14 this section, the term ‘political appointee’ means an em-
15 ployee of the Department who holds—

16 “(1) a position which has been excepted from
17 the competitive service by reason of its confidential,
18 policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advo-
19 cating character; or

20 “(2) a position in the Senior Executive Service
21 as a noncareer appointee (as such term is defined in
22 section 3132(a) of title 5).”.

23 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
24 at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by

1 inserting after the item relating to section 723 the fol-
2 lowing new item:

“725. Annual performance plan for political appointees.”.

3 **SEC. 204. REEMPLOYMENT OF FORMER EMPLOYEES AT DE-**
4 **PARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding sections 3309
6 through 3318 of title 5, United States Code, the Secretary
7 of Veterans Affairs may noncompetitively appoint a quali-
8 fied former career or career conditional employee to any
9 position within the competitive service at the Department
10 of Veterans Affairs that is one grade or equivalent higher
11 than the grade or equivalent of the position at the Depart-
12 ment most recently occupied by the employee.

13 (b) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may not appoint a
14 qualified former employee to a position that is more than
15 one grade (or equivalent) higher than the position at the
16 Department most recently occupied by the employee.

17 (c) DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED FORMER EM-
18 PLOYEE.—For purposes of this section, the term “quali-
19 fied former employee” means any individual who—

20 (1) formerly occupied any career or career con-
21 ditional position at the Department of Veterans Af-
22 fairs within 2 years before applying for reemploy-
23 ment at the Department;

1 (2) voluntarily left such position, or was subject
2 to a reduction in force, and had a satisfactory per-
3 formance record while occupying such position; and

4 (3) since leaving such position has maintained
5 licensing requirements, related to the position, if
6 any, and gained skill, knowledge, or other factors re-
7 lated to the position.

8 **SEC. 205. PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TECHNICAL**
9 **EXPERTS AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AF-**
10 **FAIRS.**

11 Not later than one year after the date of the enact-
12 ment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall
13 establish a promotional track system for employees of the
14 Department of Veterans Affairs that the Secretary deter-
15 mines are technical experts pursuant to regulations pre-
16 scribed by the Secretary for purposes of carrying out this
17 section. Such system shall—

18 (1) provide any such employee the opportunity
19 to advance within the Department without being re-
20 quired to transition to a management position; and

21 (2) for purposes of achieving career advance-
22 ment—

23 (A) provide for the establishment of new
24 positions within the Department; and

1 (B) notwithstanding any other provision of
2 law, provide for increases in pay for any such
3 employee.

4 **SEC. 206. EMPLOYMENT OF STUDENTS AND RECENT GRAD-**
5 **UATES BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AF-**
6 **FAIRS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
8 shall prescribe regulations to allow for excepted service ap-
9 pointments of students and recent graduates leading to
10 conversion to career or career conditional employment of
11 a student or recent graduate of a qualifying educational
12 institution, as defined by the Department.

13 (b) APPLICABILITY.—The conversion authority de-
14 scribed in subsection (a) shall be applicable to individuals
15 in good standing who—

16 (1) are employed in a qualifying internship or
17 fellowship program at the Department;

18 (2) are employed in the Department in a volun-
19 teer capacity and performing substantive duties com-
20 parable to those of individuals in internship or fel-
21 lowship programs and meet the required number of
22 hours for conversion;

23 (3) are employed in the Department under a
24 contract or agreement with an external nonprofit or-
25 ganization and performing substantive duties com-

1 parable to those of individuals in internship or fel-
2 lowship programs;

3 (4) have received educational assistance under
4 chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code; or

5 (5) graduated from a qualifying educational in-
6 stitution, as defined by the Department, and have
7 not reached 30 years of age.

8 (c) UNIFORMITY.—For the purposes of paragraphs
9 (2) and (3) of subsection (b), hours of work performed
10 by an individual employed shall be considered equal to
11 those performed by an individual employed in a qualifying
12 internship or fellowship program by the Department.

13 **SEC. 207. ENCOURAGEMENT OF TRANSITION OF MILITARY**
14 **MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS INTO EMPLOY-**
15 **MENT WITH VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRA-**
16 **TION.**

17 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a
18 program to encourage an individual who serves in the
19 Armed Forces with a military occupational specialty relat-
20 ing to the provision of health care to seek employment
21 with the Veterans Health Administration when the indi-
22 vidual has been discharged or released from service in the
23 Armed Forces or is contemplating separating from such
24 service.

1 **SEC. 208. RECRUITING DATABASE AT DEPARTMENT OF**
2 **VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

3 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans
4 Affairs shall establish a single database that lists—

5 (1) each vacant position in the Department of
6 Veterans Affairs that the Secretary determines is
7 critical to the mission of the Department, difficult to
8 fill, or both; and

9 (2) each vacant position in the Department of
10 Veterans Affairs for a mental health professional.

11 (b) QUALIFIED APPLICANT.—If the Secretary deter-
12 mines that an applicant for a vacant position listed in the
13 database established under subsection (a) is qualified for
14 such position but does not select the applicant for such
15 position, the Secretary, at the election of the applicant,
16 may consider the applicant for other similar vacant posi-
17 tions listed in the database for which the applicant is
18 qualified.

19 (c) PROLONGED VACANCIES.—If the Secretary does
20 not fill a vacant position listed in the database established
21 under subsection (a) after a period determined appro-
22 priate by the Secretary, the Secretary—

23 (1) may ensure that applicants described in
24 subsection (b) are considered for such position; and

25 (2) may use the database established under
26 subsection (a) to assist in filling such position.

1 (d) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
2 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit
3 to Congress a report on the use and efficacy of the data-
4 base established under subsection (a).

5 **SEC. 209. TRAINING FOR HUMAN RESOURCES PROFES-**
6 **SIONALS OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINIS-**
7 **TRATION ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
9 shall provide to human resources professionals of the Vet-
10 erans Health Administration training on how to best re-
11 cruit and retain employees of the Veterans Health Admin-
12 istration, including with respect to any recruitment and
13 retention matters that are unique to the Veterans Health
14 Administration pursuant to chapter 74 of title 38, United
15 States Code, or other provisions of law.

16 (b) VIRTUAL TRAINING.—Training provided under
17 this section shall be provided virtually.

18 (c) AMOUNT OF TRAINING.—The Secretary shall en-
19 sure that each human resources professional of the Vet-
20 erans Health Administration receives the training de-
21 scribed in subsection (a)—

22 (1) as soon as practicable after being hired by
23 the Secretary as a human resources professional;
24 and

25 (2) annually thereafter.

1 (d) CERTIFICATION.—The Secretary shall require
2 that each human resources professional of the Veterans
3 Health Administration, upon the completion of the train-
4 ing described in subsection (a), certifies that the profes-
5 sional received the training and understands the informa-
6 tion provided by the training.

7 (e) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not less frequently than an-
8 nually, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on
9 Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Vet-
10 erans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report
11 on the training described in subsection (a), including the
12 cost of providing such training and the number of human
13 resources professionals who received such training during
14 the year covered by the report.

15 **SEC. 210. PLAN TO HIRE DIRECTORS OF MEDICAL CENTERS**
16 **OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

17 (a) PLAN.—Not later than 120 days after the date
18 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans
19 Affairs shall develop and implement a plan to hire highly
20 qualified directors for each medical center of the Depart-
21 ment of Veterans Affairs that lacks a permanent director
22 as of the date of the plan.

23 (b) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall prioritize under
24 the plan developed under subsection (a) the hiring of di-

1 rectors for medical centers that have not had a permanent
2 director for the longest periods.

3 (c) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The plan developed under
4 subsection (a) shall include the following:

5 (1) A deadline to hire directors of medical cen-
6 ters of the Department as described in such sub-
7 section.

8 (2) Identification of the possible impediments to
9 such hiring.

10 (3) Identification of opportunities to promote
11 and train candidates from within the Department to
12 senior executive positions in the Department, includ-
13 ing as directors of medical centers.

14 (d) SUBMITTAL OF PLAN.—Not later than 120 days
15 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
16 shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
17 Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the
18 House of Representatives the plan developed under sub-
19 section (a).

20 (e) SEMIANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than 180
21 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and not
22 later than 180 days thereafter, the Secretary shall submit
23 to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and
24 the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Rep-
25 resentatives a report containing a list of each medical cen-

1 ter of the Department that lacks a permanent director as
2 of the date of the report.

3 **SEC. 211. EXIT SURVEYS AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS**
4 **AFFAIRS.**

5 (a) EXIT SURVEYS REQUIRED.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
7 Affairs shall develop and carry out a standardized
8 exit survey to be voluntarily completed by career and
9 noncareer employees and executives of the Depart-
10 ment of Veterans Affairs who voluntarily separate
11 from the Department.

12 (2) CONSULTATION.—Such exit survey shall be
13 developed in consultation with an appropriate non-
14 Department entity with experience developing such
15 surveys.

16 (b) SURVEY CONTENT.—The survey shall include, at
17 a minimum, the following:

18 (1) Reasons for leaving the Department.

19 (2) Efforts made by the supervisor of the em-
20 ployee to retain the individual.

21 (3) The extent of job satisfaction and engage-
22 ment during the employment.

23 (4) The intent of employee to either remain em-
24 ployed within the Federal Government or to leave
25 employment with the Federal Government.

1 (5) Such other matters as the Secretary deter-
2 mines appropriate.

3 (c) ANONYMITY OF SURVEY CONTENT.—The Sec-
4 retary shall ensure that data collected under subsection
5 (a)—

6 (1) is anonymized, including through the use of
7 a location that allows for privacy;

8 (2) is not directly visible by another employee;
9 and

10 (3) does not require the departing employee to
11 input any personally identifiable data.

12 (d) SHARING OF SURVEY DATA.—The Secretary
13 shall ensure that the results of the survey required by sub-
14 section (a) are—

15 (1) aggregated at the Veterans Integrated Serv-
16 ice Network level; and

17 (2) shared on an annual basis with directors
18 and managers of facilities of the Department and
19 the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

20 (e) ANNUAL REPORT.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
22 after the date of the enactment of this Act and not
23 less frequently than once each year thereafter, the
24 Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Vet-
25 erans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on

1 Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a
2 report containing the aggregate results of the exit
3 survey under subsection (a) covering the year prior
4 to the report.

5 (2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under
6 paragraph (1) shall include, for the period covered
7 by the report, the following:

8 (A) An analysis of the most common rea-
9 sons employees choose to leave the Department.

10 (B) The steps the Secretary is taking to
11 improve retention, particularly for mission-crit-
12 ical occupations.

13 (C) The demographic characteristics of
14 employees choosing to leave the Department.

15 (D) Any legislative barriers to improving
16 employee retention.

17 (E) The total number of employees who
18 voluntarily separated from the Department and
19 the number and percentage of whom took the
20 exit survey under subsection (a).

21 **SEC. 212. REQUIREMENT THAT PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS EM-**
22 **PLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS**
23 **AFFAIRS RECEIVE COMPETITIVE PAY.**

24 Section 7451(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code,
25 is amended—

1 (1) by redesignating subparagraph (B) as sub-
2 paragraph (C);

3 (2) by inserting after subparagraph (A) the fol-
4 lowing new subparagraph (B):

5 “(B) Physician assistant.”; and

6 (3) in subparagraph (C), as redesignated by
7 paragraph (1), by striking “and registered nurse”
8 and inserting “registered nurse, and physician as-
9 sistant”.

10 **SEC. 213. EXPANSION OF DIRECT-HIRING AUTHORITY FOR**
11 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IN**
12 **CASE OF SHORTAGE OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED**
13 **CANDIDATES.**

14 Section 3304(a)(3)(B) of title 5, United States Code,
15 is amended by inserting “(or, with respect to the Depart-
16 ment of Veterans Affairs, that there exists a severe short-
17 age of highly qualified candidates)” after “severe shortage
18 of candidates”.

19 **SEC. 214. COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED**
20 **STATES ASSESSMENT OF SUCCESSION PLAN-**
21 **NING AT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AF-**
22 **FAIRS.**

23 (a) ASSESSMENT.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of
25 the United States shall assess the extent to which

1 key succession planning policies and guidance at the
2 Department of Veterans Affairs, including the Vet-
3 erans Health Administration, the Veterans Benefits
4 Administration, and the National Cemetery Adminis-
5 tration, are consistent with leading practices for suc-
6 cession and workforce planning identified by Comp-
7 troller General.

8 (2) ADDITIONAL MATTERS.—In carrying out
9 the assessment required by paragraph (1), the
10 Comptroller General may assess such other matters
11 as the Comptroller General considers appropriate.

12 (b) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the date
13 of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall
14 submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Sen-
15 ate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House
16 of Representatives a report on the assessment carried out
17 under subsection (a).

18 (c) SENSE OF CONGRESS ON STUDY ON COMPLIANCE
19 WITH POLICIES AND GUIDANCE.—It is the sense of Con-
20 gress that—

21 (1) the Comptroller General should conduct a
22 study to examine the extent to which a sampling of
23 installations of the Department of Veterans Affairs
24 are complying with policies and guidance of the De-

1 partment, as well as applicable leading practices;
2 and

3 (2) the scope and timeframe of a study con-
4 ducted as described in paragraph (1) may be de-
5 pendent upon the findings of the Comptroller Gen-
6 eral with respect to the assessment carried out
7 under subsection (a).

8 **TITLE III—MAJOR MEDICAL**
9 **FACILITY LEASES**

10 **SEC. 301. AUTHORIZATION OF CERTAIN MAJOR MEDICAL**
11 **FACILITY LEASES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF**
12 **VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

13 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the
14 following major medical facility leases at the locations
15 specified and in an amount for each lease not to exceed
16 the amount specified for such location (not including any
17 estimated cancellation costs):

18 (1) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Ann
19 Arbor, Michigan, an amount not to exceed
20 \$4,247,000.

21 (2) For a new outpatient mental health clinic,
22 Birmingham, Alabama, an amount not to exceed
23 \$6,649,000.

24 (3) For new research space, Boston, Massachu-
25 setts, an amount not to exceed \$6,224,000.

1 (4) For a replacement research space, Charles-
2 ton, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed
3 \$7,274,000.

4 (5) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Corpus
5 Christi, Texas, an amount not to exceed \$6,556,000.

6 (6) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Day-
7 tona Beach, Florida, an amount not to exceed
8 \$12,198,000.

9 (7) For a replacement Chief Business Office
10 Purchased Care office space, Denver, Colorado, an
11 amount not to exceed \$14,784,000.

12 (8) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Fred-
13 ericksburg, Virginia, an amount not to exceed
14 \$45,015,000.

15 (9) For a new outpatient clinic, Gainesville,
16 Florida, an amount not to exceed \$7,891,000.

17 (10) For an outpatient mental health clinic,
18 Gainesville, Florida, an amount not to exceed
19 \$4,320,000.

20 (11) For a replacement outpatient clinic,
21 Hampton Roads, Virginia, an amount not to exceed
22 \$18,141,000.

23 (12) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Indi-
24 anapolis, Indiana, an amount not to exceed
25 \$7,876,000.

1 (13) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Jack-
2 sonville, Florida, an amount not to exceed
3 \$18,623,000.

4 (14) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Mis-
5 soula, Montana, an amount not to exceed
6 \$6,942,000.

7 (15) For a replacement outpatient mental
8 health clinic, Northern Colorado, Colorado, an
9 amount not to exceed \$8,904,000.

10 (16) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Ocala,
11 Florida, an amount not to exceed \$5,026,000.

12 (17) For a new outpatient clinic, Oxnard, Cali-
13 fornia, an amount not to exceed \$5,274,000.

14 (18) For a new outpatient clinic, Pike County,
15 Georgia, an amount not to exceed \$5,565,000.

16 (19) For a new outpatient clinic, Pittsburgh,
17 Pennsylvania, an amount not to exceed \$6,247,000.

18 (20) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Port-
19 land, Maine, an amount not to exceed \$6,808,000.

20 (21) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Ra-
21 leigh, North Carolina, an amount not to exceed
22 \$21,870,000.

23 (22) For a replacement outpatient clinic, phase
24 II, Rochester, New York, an amount not to exceed
25 \$3,645,000.

1 (23) For a replacement research space, San
2 Diego, California, an amount not to exceed
3 \$4,852,000.

4 (24) For a new outpatient clinic, Santa Rosa,
5 California, an amount not to exceed \$6,922,000.

6 (25) For a replacement mental health clinic,
7 Tampa, Florida, an amount not to exceed
8 \$13,387,000.

9 (26) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Lake-
10 land, Tampa, Florida, an amount not to exceed
11 \$10,760,000.

12 (27) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Terre
13 Haute, Indiana, an amount not to exceed
14 \$4,102,000.

15 (28) For a replacement outpatient clinic, Rapid
16 City, South Dakota, an amount not to exceed
17 \$4,532,000.

18 **SEC. 302. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR MED-**
19 **ICAL FACILITY LEASES.**

20 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
21 retary of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2018 or the year
22 in which funds are appropriated for the Medical Facilities
23 account \$274,634,000 for the major medical facility leases
24 authorized in section 301.

1 **TITLE IV—OTHER MATTERS**

2 **SEC. 401. EXTENSION OF REDUCTION IN AMOUNT OF PEN-**
3 **SION FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT OF VET-**
4 **ERANS AFFAIRS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS**
5 **COVERED BY MEDICAID PLANS FOR SERV-**
6 **ICES FURNISHED BY NURSING FACILITIES.**

7 Section 5503(d)(7) of title 38, United States Code,
8 is amended by striking “September 30, 2024” and insert-
9 ing “September 30, 2027”.

10 **SEC. 402. EXTENSION OF REQUIREMENT FOR COLLECTION**
11 **OF FEES FOR HOUSING LOANS GUARANTEED**
12 **BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

13 Section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code,
14 is amended—

15 (1) in subparagraph (A)—

16 (A) in clause (iii), by striking “September
17 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30,
18 2027”; and

19 (B) in clause (iv), by striking “September
20 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30,
21 2027”;

22 (2) in subparagraph (B)—

23 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September
24 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30,
25 2027”; and

1 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September
2 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30,
3 2027”;

4 (3) in subparagraph (C)—

5 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September
6 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30,
7 2027”; and

8 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September
9 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30,
10 2027”; and

11 (4) in subparagraph (D)—

12 (A) in clause (i), by striking “September
13 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30,
14 2027”; and

15 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “September
16 30, 2024” and inserting “September 30,
17 2027”.

18 **SEC. 403. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO USE INCOME IN-**
19 **FORMATION.**

20 Section 5317(g) of title 38, United States Code, is
21 amended by striking “September 30, 2024” and inserting
22 “September 30, 2027”.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to authorize appropriations and to appropriate amounts for the Veterans Choice Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to improve hiring authorities of the Department, to

authorize major medical facility leases, and for other purposes.”.

