To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and maintain a website of the Department that allows the public to obtain electronic copies of certain legislatively requested reports of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 4, 2019

Mr. Rose of New York (for himself and Mr. Cisneros) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs

OCTOBER --, 2019

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on October 4, 2019]
A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and maintain a website of the Department that allows the public to obtain electronic copies of certain legislatively requested reports of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.
Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “VA Reporting Trans-
parency Act”.

SEC. 2. REQUIRING PUBLIC ACCESS THROUGH DEPART-
MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS WEBSITE TO

LEGISLATIVELY REQUESTED REPORTS OF

THE DEPARTMENT.

(a) REQUIREMENT TO ALLOW ACCESS ONLINE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after
the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall
establish and maintain a website of the Department
that allows the public to obtain electronic copies of all
legislatively requested reports required to be submitted
after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) EXISTING RESOURCES.—To the extent pos-
sible, the Secretary shall carry out paragraph (1) by
using existing online resources administered by the
Secretary.

(b) CONTENT AND FUNCTION.—The Secretary shall en-
sure that the website includes the following:

(1) With respect to each legislatively requested
report, each of the following:
(A) A citation to the statute requiring the report.

(B) An electronic copy of the report, including any transmittal letter associated with the report, that is platform independent and available to the public without restrictions, including restrictions that would impede the reuse of the information in the report. Where practicable, the report shall be in an open format.

(C) The ability to retrieve a report, to the extent practicable, through searches based on each, and any combination, of the following:

   (i) The title of the report.

   (ii) The date of publication.

   (iii) Any congressional committee or subcommittee receiving the report.

   (iv) The Act of Congress or conference report that requests the report.

   (v) Subject tags.

   (vi) A unique alphanumerical identifier for the report that is consistent across report editions.

   (vii) Any serial number, Superintendent of Documents number, or other identification number for the report.
(viii) Key words.
(ix) Full text search.

(x) Any other information the Secretary determines appropriate.

(D) The date on which the report was required to be submitted to the website.

(E) The date on which the report was submitted to the website.

(F) To the extent practicable, a permanent means of accessing the report electronically.

(2) A means for bulk download of all legislatively requested reports.

(3) A means for downloading individual reports as the result of a search.

(4) In tabular form, a list of all legislatively requested reports that can be searched, sorted, and downloaded by—

(A) reports submitted within the required time;

(B) reports submitted after the date on which such reports were required to be submitted; and

(C) reports not submitted.

(c) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall ensure that information required to be published on the website under this
Act with respect to a legislatively requested report submitted after the period under subsection (a)(1) is published not earlier than 30 days after the report is submitted and not later than 45 days after the report is submitted.

(d) Notice on Website of Withheld Reports.—If, at the time a requirement or request for a legislatively requested report is made pursuant to an Act of Congress or a conference report, Congress includes in such Act or conference report, as the case may be, specific language exempting the report from publication on a website under this section, the Secretary shall publish on such website the title of the report and notice that Congress exempted the report from publication.

(e) Free Access.—The Secretary may not charge a fee, require registration, or impose any other limitation in exchange for access to the website.

SEC. 3. RELATIONSHIP TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT.

(a) In General.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to—

(1) require the disclosure of information, records, or reports that are exempt from public disclosure under section 552 of title 5, United States Code; or

(2) impose any affirmative duty on the Secretary to review legislatively requested reports sub-
mitted for publication to the website for the purpose of identifying and redacting such information or records.

(b) Redaction of Information.—The Secretary may redact information required to be disclosed under this Act if the information would be properly withheld from disclosure under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, and shall—

(1) redact information required to be disclosed under this Act if disclosure of such information is prohibited by law;

(2) redact only such information properly withheld under this subsection from the submission of information or from any legislatively requested report submitted under this Act;

(3) identify where any such redaction is made in the submission or report; and

(4) identify the exemption under which each such redaction is made.

SEC. 4. REPORTS REQUIRED.

(a) Recurring Reports That the Secretary Recommends Discontinuing.—The Secretary shall submit to Congress a report regarding recurring legislatively requested reports that the Secretary recommends discontinuing not later than—
(1) 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act; and
(2) two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) COMPLIANCE OF VA WEBSITE WITH FEDERAL STATUTES, REGULATIONS, RULES, AND GUIDANCE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report regarding the compliance of the website of the Department with Federal statutes, regulations, rules, and guidance regarding transparency for and access by the public and Congress, including requirements for links and information subject to section 552 of title 5, United States Code, and the Inspector General Act of 1978 (Public Law 95–452).

SEC. 5. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) LEGISLATIVELY REQUESTED REPORT.—The term “legislatively requested report” means a report to be submitted by the Secretary to either house of Congress or any committee of Congress or subcommittee thereof pursuant to—
(A) an Act of Congress enacted not more than eight years before the date of the enactment of this Act; or
(B) a conference report adopted not more than eight years before the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) **OPEN FORMAT.**—The term “open format” means a file format for storing digital data based on an underlying open standard that—

(A) is not encumbered by any restrictions that would impede reuse; and

(B) is based on an underlying open data standard that is maintained by a standards organization.

(3) **DEPARTMENT.**—The term “Department” means the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(4) **SECRETARY.**—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.