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(Original Signature of Member)

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. R. 1259**

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, and for other purposes

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. ROE of Tennessee introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, 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; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4        (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the  
5        “VA Accountability First Act of 2017”.

6        (b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for  
7        this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. References to title 38, United States Code.
- Sec. 3. Removal, demotion, and suspension of employees based on performance or misconduct.
- Sec. 4. Reduction of benefits for Department of Veterans Affairs employees convicted of certain crimes.
- Sec. 5. Authority to recoup bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Sec. 6. Authority to recoup relocation expenses paid to or on behalf of employees of Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Sec. 7. Time period for response to notice of adverse actions against supervisory employees who commit prohibited personnel actions.
- Sec. 8. Direct hiring authority for medical center directors and VISN directors.
- Sec. 9. Time periods for review of adverse actions with respect to certain employees.

1 **SEC. 2. REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.**

2 Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in  
3 this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms  
4 of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provi-  
5 sion, the reference shall be considered to be made to a  
6 section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

7 **SEC. 3. REMOVAL, DEMOTION, AND SUSPENSION OF EM-**  
8 **LOYEES BASED ON PERFORMANCE OR MIS-**  
9 **CONDUCT.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 is  
11 amended by adding at the end the following new section:

12 **“§ 719. Employees: removal, demotion, or suspension**  
13 **based on performance or misconduct**

14 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may remove, de-  
15 mote, or suspend an individual who is an employee of the  
16 Department if the Secretary determines the performance  
17 or misconduct of the individual warrants such removal, de-  
18 motion, or suspension. If the Secretary so removes, de-

1 notes, or suspends such an individual, the Secretary  
2 may—

3           “(1) remove the individual from the civil service  
4           (as defined in section 2101 of title 5);

5           “(2) demote the individual by means of a reduc-  
6           tion in grade for which the individual is qualified,  
7           that the Secretary determines is appropriate, and  
8           that reduces the annual rate of pay of the individual;  
9           or

10           “(3) suspend the individual.

11           “(b) PAY OF CERTAIN DEMOTED INDIVIDUALS.—(1)  
12 Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any individual  
13 subject to a demotion under subsection (a)(2) shall, begin-  
14 ning on the date of such demotion, receive the annual rate  
15 of pay applicable to such grade.

16           “(2) An individual so demoted may not be placed on  
17 administrative leave during the period during which an ap-  
18 peal (if any) under this section is ongoing, and may only  
19 receive pay if the individual reports for duty or is approved  
20 to use accrued unused annual, sick, family medical, mili-  
21 tary, or court leave. If an individual so demoted does not  
22 report for duty or receive approval to use accrued unused  
23 leave, such individual shall not receive pay or other bene-  
24 fits pursuant to subsection (e)(5).

1           “(c) NOTICE TO CONGRESS.—(1) Not later than 30  
2 days after removing, demoting, or suspending an indi-  
3 vidual employed in a senior executive position under sub-  
4 section (a) or after removing, demoting, or suspending an  
5 individual under chapter 74 of this title, the Secretary  
6 shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of  
7 the Senate and House of Representatives and to each  
8 Member of Congress representing a district in the State  
9 or territory where the facility where the individual was em-  
10 ployed immediately before being removed, demoted, or sus-  
11 pended is located notice in writing of such removal, demo-  
12 tion, or suspension. Such notice shall include the job title  
13 of the individual, the location where the individual was em-  
14 ployed immediately before being removed, demoted, or sus-  
15 pended, the proposed action, and the reason for such re-  
16 moval, demotion, or suspension.

17           “(2) Not later than 30 days after the last day of a  
18 fiscal year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees  
19 on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Rep-  
20 resentatives a report listing all removals, demotions, and  
21 suspensions under this section or under chapter 74 of this  
22 title during such fiscal year. Each such report shall in-  
23 clude the job title of each individual removed, demoted,  
24 or suspended, the location where the individual was em-  
25 ployed immediately before being so removed, demoted or

1 suspended, the proposed action, and the reason for such  
2 removal, demotion, or suspension.

3 “(3) In this subsection, the term ‘senior executive po-  
4 sition’ means, with respect to a career appointee (as that  
5 term is defined in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5), a Senior  
6 Executive Service position (as such term is defined in sec-  
7 tion 3132(a)(2) of title 5).

8 “(d) PROCEDURE.—(1) Subsection (b) of section  
9 7513 of title 5 shall apply with respect to a removal, demo-  
10 tion, or suspension under this section, except that the pe-  
11 riod for notice and response, which includes the advance  
12 notice period required by paragraph (1) of such subsection  
13 and the response period required by paragraph (2) of such  
14 subsection, shall not exceed a total of 10 business days.  
15 Subsection (c) of such section and section 7121 of such  
16 title shall not apply with respect to such a removal, demo-  
17 tion, or suspension.

18 “(2) The Secretary shall issue a final decision with  
19 respect to a removal, demotion, or suspension under this  
20 section—

21 “(A) in the case of a proposed removal, demo-  
22 tion, or suspension to which an individual responds  
23 under paragraph (1), not later than five business  
24 days after receiving the response of the individual;  
25 or

1           “(B) in the case of a proposed removal, demo-  
2           tion, or suspension to which an individual does not  
3           respond, not later than 15 business days after the  
4           Secretary provides notice to the individual under  
5           paragraph (1).

6           “(3) The procedures under chapter 43 of title 5 shall  
7           not apply to a removal, demotion, or suspension under this  
8           section.

9           “(4)(A) Subject to subparagraph (B) and subsection  
10          (e), any removal, demotion, or suspension under sub-  
11          section (a) may be appealed to the Merit Systems Protec-  
12          tion Board, which shall refer such appeal to an adminis-  
13          trative judge pursuant to section 7701(b)(1) of title 5.

14          “(B) An appeal under subparagraph (A) of a re-  
15          moval, demotion, or suspension may only be made if such  
16          appeal is made not later than 7 days after the date of  
17          such removal, demotion, or suspension.

18          “(e) EXPEDITED REVIEW.—(1) Upon receipt of an  
19          appeal under subsection (d)(4)(A), the administrative  
20          judge shall expedite any such appeal under such section  
21          and, in any such case, shall issue a final and complete  
22          decision not later than 45 business days after the date  
23          of the appeal.

24          “(2) Notwithstanding section 7701(c)(1)(B) of title  
25          5, the administrative judge shall uphold the decision of

1 the Secretary to remove, demote, or suspend an employee  
2 under subsection (a) if the decision is supported by sub-  
3 stantial evidence. If the decision of the Secretary is sup-  
4 ported by substantial evidence, the administrative judge  
5 shall not mitigate the penalty prescribed by the Secretary.

6 “(3)(A) The decision of the administrative judge  
7 under paragraph (1) may be appealed to the Merit Sys-  
8 tems Protection Board.

9 “(B) An appeal under subparagraph (A) of a decision  
10 of an administrative judge may only be made if such ap-  
11 peal is made not later than 7 business days after the date  
12 of the decision of the administrative judge.

13 “(4) In any case in which the administrative judge  
14 cannot issue a decision in accordance with the 45-day re-  
15 quirement under paragraph (1), the Merit Systems Pro-  
16 tection Board shall, not later than 14 business days after  
17 the expiration of the 45-day period, submit to the Commit-  
18 tees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Rep-  
19 resentatives a report that explains the reasons why a deci-  
20 sion was not issued in accordance with such requirement.

21 “(5)(A) A decision of the Merit Systems Protection  
22 Board under paragraph (3) may be appealed to the United  
23 States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit pursuant  
24 to section 7703 of title 5.

1           “(B) An appeal under subparagraph (A) of a decision  
2 of the Merit Systems Protection Board may only be made  
3 if such appeal is made not later than 7 business days after  
4 the date of the decision of the Board.

5           “(C) Any decision by such Court shall be in compli-  
6 ance with section 7462(f)(2) of this title.

7           “(6) The Merit Systems Protection Board may not  
8 stay any removal, demotion, under this section.

9           “(7) During the period beginning on the date on  
10 which an individual appeals a removal from the civil serv-  
11 ice under subsection (d) and ending on the date that the  
12 United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit  
13 issues a final decision on such appeal, such individual may  
14 not receive any pay, awards, bonuses, incentives, allow-  
15 ances, differentials, student loan repayments, special pay-  
16 ments, or benefits related to the employment of the indi-  
17 vidual by the Department.

18           “(8) To the maximum extent practicable, the Sec-  
19 retary shall provide to the Merit Systems Protection  
20 Board such information and assistance as may be nec-  
21 essary to ensure an appeal under this subsection is expe-  
22 dited.

23           “(9) If an employee prevails on appeal under this sec-  
24 tion, the employee shall be entitled to backpay (as pro-  
25 vided in section 5596 of title 5).

1           “(10) This subsection shall supercede any collective  
2 bargaining agreement to the extent that such an agree-  
3 ment conflicts with this subsection.

4           “(f) WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION.—(1) In the  
5 case of an individual seeking corrective action (or on be-  
6 half of whom corrective action is sought) from the Office  
7 of Special Counsel based on an alleged prohibited per-  
8 sonnel practice described in section 2302(b) of title 5, the  
9 Secretary may not remove, demote, or suspend such indi-  
10 vidual under subsection (a) without the approval of the  
11 Special Counsel under section 1214(f) of title 5.

12           “(2) In the case of an individual who has filed a whis-  
13 tleblower complaint, as such term is defined in section 731  
14 of this title, the Secretary may not remove, demote, or  
15 suspend such individual under subsection (a) until a final  
16 decision with respect to the whistleblower complaint has  
17 been made.

18           “(g) TERMINATION OF INVESTIGATIONS BY OFFICE  
19 OF SPECIAL COUNSEL.—Notwithstanding any other provi-  
20 sion of law, the Special Counsel (established by section  
21 1211 of title 5) may terminate an investigation of a pro-  
22 hibited personnel practice alleged by an employee or  
23 former employee of the Department after the Special  
24 Counsel provides to the employee or former employee a  
25 written statement of the reasons for the termination of

1 the investigation. Such statement may not be admissible  
2 as evidence in any judicial or administrative proceeding  
3 without the consent of such employee or former employee.

4 “(h) VACANCIES.—In the case of an individual who  
5 is removed or demoted under subsection (a), to the max-  
6 imum extent feasible, the Secretary shall fill the vacancy  
7 arising as a result of such removal or demotion.

8 “(i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 “(1) The term ‘individual’ means an individual  
10 occupying a position at the Department but does not  
11 include—

12 “(A) an individual appointed pursuant to  
13 sections 7306, 7401(1), or 7405 of this title;

14 “(B) an individual who has not completed  
15 a probationary or trial period; or

16 “(C) a political appointee.

17 “(2) The term ‘suspend’ means the placing of  
18 an employee, for disciplinary reasons, in a temporary  
19 status without duties and pay for a period in excess  
20 of 14 days.

21 “(3) The term ‘grade’ has the meaning given  
22 such term in section 7511(a) of title 5.

23 “(4) The term ‘misconduct’ includes neglect of  
24 duty, malfeasance, or failure to accept a directed re-

1 assignment or to accompany a position in a transfer  
2 of function.

3 “(5) The term ‘political appointee’ means an in-  
4 dividual who is—

5 “(A) employed in a position described  
6 under sections 5312 through 5316 of title 5  
7 (relating to the Executive Schedule);

8 “(B) a limited term appointee, limited  
9 emergency appointee, or noncareer appointee in  
10 the Senior Executive Service, as defined under  
11 paragraphs (5), (6), and (7), respectively, of  
12 section 3132(a) of title 5; or

13 “(C) employed in a position of a confiden-  
14 tial or policy-determining character under  
15 schedule C of subpart C of part 213 of title 5  
16 of the Code of Federal Regulations.”.

17 (b) REPEAL OF SUPERCEDED PROVISION OF LAW.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 713 of title 38,  
19 United States Code, is here by repealed.

20 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-  
21 tions at the beginning of chapter 7 is amended by  
22 striking the item relating to section 713.

23 (c) CLERICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

24 (1) CLERICAL.—The table of sections at the be-  
25 ginning of chapter 7 is amended by inserting after

1 the item relating to section 717 the following new  
2 item:

“719. Employees: removal, demotion, or suspension based on performance or  
misconduct.”.

3 (2) CONFORMING.—Section 4303(f) of title 5,  
4 United States Code, is amended—

5 (A) by striking “or” at the end of para-  
6 graph (2);

7 (B) by striking the period at the end of  
8 paragraph (3) and inserting “, or”; and

9 (C) by adding at the end the following:

10 “(4) any removal or demotion under section  
11 719 of title 38.”.

12 (d) TEMPORARY EXEMPTION FROM CERTAIN LIM-  
13 TATION ON INITIATION FROM REMOVAL FROM SENIOR  
14 EXECUTIVE SERVICE.—During the 120-day period begin-  
15 ning on the date of enactment of this Act, an action to  
16 remove an individual from the Senior Executive Service  
17 at the Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to this  
18 section may be initiated, notwithstanding section 3592(b)  
19 of title 5, United States Code, or any other provision of  
20 law.

21 **SEC. 4. REDUCTION OF BENEFITS FOR DEPARTMENT OF**  
22 **VETERANS AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES CONVICTED**  
23 **OF CERTAIN CRIMES.**

24 (a) REDUCTION OF BENEFITS.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 is  
2 further amended by inserting after section 719, as  
3 added by section 3, the following new section:

4 **“§ 721. Reduction of benefits of employees convicted**  
5 **of certain crimes**

6           “(a) REDUCTION OF ANNUITY FOR REMOVED EM-  
7 PLOYEE.—(1) The Secretary shall order that the covered  
8 service of an employee of the Department removed from  
9 a position for performance or misconduct under section  
10 719 or 7461 of this title or any other provision of law  
11 shall not be taken into account for purposes of calculating  
12 an annuity with respect to such individual under chapter  
13 83 or chapter 84 of title 5, if—

14           “(A) the Secretary determines that the indi-  
15 vidual is convicted of a felony that influenced the in-  
16 dividual’s performance while employed in the posi-  
17 tion; and

18           “(B) before such order is made, the individual  
19 is afforded—

20                   “(i) notice of the proposed order; and

21                   “(ii) an opportunity to respond to the pro-  
22 posed order by not later than ten business days  
23 following receipt of such notice; and

24           “(C) the Secretary issues the order—

1           “(i) in the case of a proposed order to  
2           which an individual responds under subpara-  
3           graph (B)(ii), not later than five business days  
4           after receiving the response of the individual; or

5           “(ii) in the case of a proposed order to  
6           which an individual does not respond, not later  
7           than 15 business days after the Secretary pro-  
8           vides notice to the individual under subpara-  
9           graph (B)(i).

10          “(2) Upon the issuance of an order by the Secretary  
11          under paragraph (1), the individual shall have an oppor-  
12          tunity to appeal the order to the Director of the Office  
13          of Personnel Management before the date that is seven  
14          business days after the date of such issuance.

15          “(3) The Director of the Office of Personnel Manage-  
16          ment shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal  
17          under paragraph (2) within 30 business days of receiving  
18          the appeal.

19          “(b) REDUCTION OF ANNUITY FOR RETIRED EM-  
20          PLOYEE.—(1) The Secretary may order that the covered  
21          service of an individual who is removed for performance  
22          or misconduct under section 719 or 7461 of this title or  
23          any other provision of law but who leaves employment at  
24          the Department prior to the issuance of a final decision  
25          with respect to such action shall not be taken into account

1 for purposes of calculating an annuity with respect to such  
2 individual under chapter 83 or chapter 84 of title 5, if—

3 “(A) the Secretary determines that individual is  
4 convicted of a felony that influenced the individual’s  
5 performance while employed in the position; and

6 “(B) before such order is made, the individual  
7 is afforded—

8 “(i) notice of the proposed order;

9 “(ii) opportunity to respond to the pro-  
10 posed order by not later than ten business days  
11 following receipt of such notice; and

12 “(C) the Secretary issues the order—

13 “(i) in the case of a proposed order to  
14 which an individual responds under subpara-  
15 graph (B)(ii), not later than five business days  
16 after receiving the response of the individual; or

17 “(ii) in the case of a proposed order to  
18 which an individual does not respond, not later  
19 than 15 business days after the Secretary pro-  
20 vides notice to the individual under subpara-  
21 graph (B)(i).

22 “(2) Upon the issuance of an order by the Secretary  
23 under paragraph (1), the individual shall have an oppor-  
24 tunity to appeal the order to the Director of the Office

1 of Personnel Management before the date that is seven  
2 business days after the date of such issuance.

3 “(3) The Director of the Office of Personnel Manage-  
4 ment shall make a final decision with respect to an appeal  
5 under paragraph (2) within 30 business days of receiving  
6 the appeal.

7 “(c) ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS.—Not later  
8 than 37 business days after the Secretary issues a final  
9 order under subsection (a) or (b), the Director of the Of-  
10 fice of Personnel Management shall recalculate the annu-  
11 ity of the individual.

12 “(d) LUMP-SUM ANNUITY CREDIT.—Any individual  
13 with respect to whom an annuity is reduced under sub-  
14 section (a) or (b) shall be entitled to be paid so much of  
15 such individual’s lump-sum credit as is attributable to the  
16 period of covered service.

17 “(e) SPOUSE OR CHILDREN EXCEPTION.—The Sec-  
18 retary, in consultation with the Office of Personnel Man-  
19 agement, shall prescribe regulations that may provide for  
20 the payment to the spouse or children of any individual  
21 referred to in subsection (a) or (b) of any amounts which  
22 (but for this subsection) would otherwise have been non-  
23 payable by reason of such subsections. Any such regula-  
24 tions shall be consistent with the requirements of section  
25 8332(o)(5) and 8411(l)(5) of title 5, as the case may be.

1       “(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

2               “(1) The term ‘covered service’ means, with re-  
3       spect to an individual subject to a removal for per-  
4       formance or misconduct under section 719 or 7461  
5       of this title or any other provision of law, the period  
6       of service beginning on the date that the Secretary  
7       determines under such applicable provision that the  
8       individual engaged in activity that gave rise to such  
9       action and ending on the date that the individual is  
10      removed from or leaves a position of employment at  
11      the Department prior to the issuance of a final deci-  
12      sion with respect to such action.

13              “(2) The term ‘lump-sum credit’ has the mean-  
14      ing given such term in section 8331(8) or section  
15      8401(19) of title 5, as the case may be.

16              “(3) The term ‘service’ has the meaning given  
17      such term in section 8331(12) or section 8401(26)  
18      of title 5, as the case may be.”.

19              (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-  
20      tions at the beginning of chapter 7 is amended by  
21      inserting after the item relating to section 719, as  
22      added by section 3, the following new item:

      “721. Reduction of benefits of employees convicted of certain crimes.”.

23              (b) APPLICATION.—Section 721 of title 38, United  
24      States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), shall apply  
25      to any action of removal of an employee of the Department

1 of Veterans Affairs under section 719 or 7461 of this title  
2 or any other provision of law, commencing on or after the  
3 date of the enactment of this Act.

4 **SEC. 5. AUTHORITY TO RECOUP BONUSES OR AWARDS**  
5 **PAID TO EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF**  
6 **VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 is fur-  
8 ther amended by inserting after section 721, as added by  
9 section 4, the following new section:

10 **“§ 723. Recoupment of bonuses or awards paid to em-**  
11 **ployees of Department**

12 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other pro-  
13 vision of law, the Secretary may issue an order directing  
14 an employee of the Department to repay the amount, or  
15 a portion of the amount, of any award or bonus paid to  
16 the employee under title 5, including under chapters 45  
17 or 53 of such title, or this title if—

18 “(1) the Secretary determines that the indi-  
19 vidual engaged in misconduct or poor performance  
20 prior to payment of the award or bonus, and that  
21 such award or bonus would not have been paid, in  
22 whole or in part, had the misconduct or poor per-  
23 formance been known prior to payment; and

24 “(2) before such repayment, the employee is af-  
25 farded—

1 “(A) notice of the proposed order; and

2 “(B) an opportunity to respond to the pro-  
3 posed order by not later than ten business days  
4 after the receipt of such notice; and

5 “(3) the Secretary issues the order—

6 “(A) in the case of a proposed order to  
7 which an individual responds under paragraph  
8 (2)(B), not later than five business days after  
9 receiving the response of the individual; or

10 “(B) in the case of a proposed order to  
11 which an individual does not respond, not later  
12 than 15 business days after the Secretary pro-  
13 vides notice to the individual under paragraph  
14 (2)(A).

15 “(b) APPEALS.—Upon the issuance of an order by  
16 the Secretary under subsection (a), the individual shall  
17 have an opportunity to appeal the order to another depart-  
18 ment or agency of the Federal Government before the date  
19 that is seven business days after the date of such issuance.

20 “(c) FINAL DECISIONS.—The head of the applicable  
21 department or agency of the Federal Government shall  
22 make a final decision with respect to an appeal under sub-  
23 section (B) within 30 business days after receiving such  
24 appeal.”.

1 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections  
2 at the beginning of such chapter, as amended by section  
3 4, is amended by inserting after the item relating to sec-  
4 tion 721, as added by section 4(a)(2), the following new  
5 item:

“723. Recoupment of bonuses or awards paid to employees of Department.”.

6 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 723 of title 38,  
7 United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall  
8 apply with respect to an award or bonus paid by the Sec-  
9 retary of Veterans Affairs to an employee of the Depart-  
10 ment of Veterans Affairs on or after the date of the enact-  
11 ment of this Act.

12 (d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act or the  
13 amendments made by this Act may be construed to modify  
14 the certification issued by the Office of Personnel Manage-  
15 ment and the Office of Management and Budget regarding  
16 the performance appraisal system of the Senior Executive  
17 Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

18 **SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO RECOUP RELOCATION EXPENSES**  
19 **PAID TO OR ON BEHALF OF EMPLOYEES OF**  
20 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 7 is fur-  
22 ther amended by adding at the end the following new sec-  
23 tion:

1 **“§ 725. Recoupment of relocation expenses paid on**  
2 **behalf of employees of Department**

3 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other pro-  
4 vision of law, the Secretary may issue an order directing  
5 an employee of the Department to repay the amount, or  
6 a portion of the amount, paid to or on behalf of the em-  
7 ployee under title 5 for relocation expenses, including any  
8 expenses under section 5724 or 5724a of such title, or  
9 this title if—

10 “(1) the Secretary determines that relocation  
11 expenses were not lawfully authorized or that the  
12 employee committed an act of fraud, waste, or mal-  
13 feasance that influenced the authorization of the re-  
14 location expenses;

15 “(2) before such repayment, the employee is af-  
16 forded—

17 “(A) notice of the proposed order; and

18 “(B) an opportunity to respond to the pro-  
19 posed order not later than ten business days  
20 following the receipt of such notice; and

21 “(3) the Secretary issues the order—

22 “(A) in the case of a proposed order to  
23 which an individual responds under paragraph  
24 (2)(B), not later than five business days after  
25 receiving the response of the individual; or

1           “(B) in the case of a proposed order to  
2           which an individual does not respond, not later  
3           than 15 business days after the Secretary pro-  
4           vides notice to the individual under paragraph  
5           (2)(A).

6           “(b) APPEALS.—Upon the issuance of an order by  
7           the Secretary under subsection (a), the individual shall  
8           have an opportunity to appeal the order to another depart-  
9           ment or agency of the Federal Government before the date  
10          that is seven business days after the date of such issuance.

11          “(c) FINAL DECISIONS.—The head of the applicable  
12          department or agency of the Federal Government shall  
13          make a final decision with respect to an appeal under sub-  
14          section (b) within 30 days after receiving such appeal.”.

15          (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections  
16          at the beginning of such chapter is further amended by  
17          inserting after the item relating to section 723, as added  
18          by section 5(b), the following new item:

          “725. Recoupment of relocation expenses paid to or on behalf of employees of  
          Department.”.

19          (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 725 of title 38,  
20          United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall  
21          apply with respect to an amount paid by the Secretary  
22          of Veterans Affairs to or on behalf of an employee of the  
23          Department of Veterans Affairs for relocation expenses on  
24          or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

1 **SEC. 7. TIME PERIOD FOR RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF AD-**  
2 **VERSE ACTIONS AGAINST SUPERVISORY EM-**  
3 **PLOYEES WHO COMMIT PROHIBITED PER-**  
4 **SONNEL ACTIONS.**

5 Section 733(a)(2)(B) is amended—

6 (1) in clause (i), by striking “14 days” and in-  
7 serting “10 days”; and

8 (2) in clause (ii), by striking “14-day period”  
9 and inserting “10-day period”.

10 **SEC. 8. DIRECT HIRING AUTHORITY FOR MEDICAL CENTER**  
11 **DIRECTORS AND VISN DIRECTORS.**

12 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 7401 is amended by add-  
13 ing at the end the following new paragraph:

14 “(4) Medical center directors and directors of  
15 Veterans Integrated Service Networks with dem-  
16 onstrated ability in the medical profession, in health  
17 care administration, or in health care fiscal manage-  
18 ment.”.

19 (b) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—Section 7404(a)(1)  
20 is amended by inserting “and 7401(4)” after “7306”.

21 **SEC. 9. TIME PERIODS FOR REVIEW OF ADVERSE ACTIONS**  
22 **WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN EMPLOYEES.**

23 (a) **PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, PODIATRISTS, CHIRO-**  
24 **PRACTORS, OPTOMETRISTS, REGISTERED NURSES, PHY-**  
25 **SICIAN ASSISTANTS, AND EXPANDED-FUNCTION DENTAL**

1 AUXILIARIES.—Section 7461(b)(2) is amended to read as  
2 follows:

3 “(2) In any case other than a case described in para-  
4 graph (1) that involves or includes a question of profes-  
5 sional conduct or competence in which a major adverse  
6 action was not taken, such an appeal shall be made  
7 through Department grievance procedures under section  
8 7463 of this title.”.

9 (b) MAJOR ADVERSE ACTIONS INVOLVING PROFES-  
10 SIONAL CONDUCT OR COMPETENCE.—Section 7462 is  
11 amended—

12 (1) in subsection (b)—

13 (A) in paragraph (1)—

14 (i) in subparagraph (A), by striking  
15 “At least 30” and inserting “Ten busi-  
16 ness”; and

17 (ii) in subparagraph (B)—

18 (I) by striking “A reasonable  
19 time, but not less than seven days”  
20 and inserting “The opportunity, with-  
21 in the ten-day notice period”; and

22 (II) by striking “orally and”;

23 (B) in paragraph (3)—

24 (i) by striking “(A) If a proposed ad-  
25 verse action covered by this section is not

1                   withdrawn” and inserting “After consid-  
2                   ering the employee’s answer, if any”;

3                   (ii) by striking “21 days” and insert-  
4                   ing “5 business days”;

5                   (iii) by striking “answer. The decision  
6                   shall include a statement of” and inserting  
7                   “answer stating”; and

8                   (iv) by striking subparagraph (B);  
9                   and

10                  (C) in paragraph (4)—

11                  (i) by striking “(A) The Secretary”  
12                  and all that follows through “(B) The Sec-  
13                  retary” and inserting “The Secretary”;  
14                  and

15                  (ii) by striking “30 days” and insert-  
16                  ing “7 business days”;

17                  (2) in subsection (c)—

18                  (A) in paragraph (3), by inserting “the  
19                  hearing must be concluded not later than 30  
20                  business days after the date on which the ap-  
21                  peal is filed, and” after “If such a hearing is  
22                  held,”; and

23                  (B) in paragraph (4)—

24                  (i) by striking “45 days” and insert-  
25                  ing “15 business days” ; and

1 (ii) by striking “120 days” and insert-  
2 ing “45 business days”; and

3 (3) in subsection (d)(1), by striking “90 days”  
4 and inserting “15 business days”.

5 (c) OTHER ADVERSE ACTIONS.—Section 7463 is  
6 amended—

7 (1) by striking subsection (b) and redesignating  
8 subsections (c) through (e) as subsections (b)  
9 through (d), respectively;

10 (2) in subsection (b)(2), as so redesignated—

11 (A) in subparagraph (A), by striking “an  
12 advance” and inserting “ten business days”;  
13 and

14 (B) in subparagraph (B)—

15 (i) by striking “a reasonable time”  
16 and inserting “the opportunity, within the  
17 ten business day notice period,”; and

18 (ii) by striking “orally and”.