

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2704

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a Future-Years Veterans Program and a quadrennial veterans review, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Chief Strategy Officer, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 17, 2013

Mr. MICHAUD (for himself and Mr. MILLER of Florida) 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 submit to Congress a Future-Years Veterans Program and a quadrennial veterans review, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Chief Strategy Officer, 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 “Department of Vet-
5 erans Affairs Budget Planning Reform Act of 2013”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF STRATEGIC PLANS TO IM-**
2 **PROVE PROGRAMS AND BENEFITS FOR VET-**
3 **ERANS.**

4 (a) FUTURE-YEARS VETERANS PROGRAM.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 38, United
6 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the
7 following new section:

8 **“§ 119. Future-Years Veterans Program**

9 “(a) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary
10 shall submit to Congress each year, at or about the time
11 that the President’s budget is submitted to Congress pur-
12 suant to section 1105(a) of title 31, a Future-Years Vet-
13 erans Program reflecting the estimated expenditures and
14 proposed appropriations included in that budget. Any such
15 Future-Years Veterans Program shall cover the fiscal year
16 with respect to which the budget is submitted and at least
17 the four succeeding fiscal years.

18 “(b) CONSISTENCY.—(1) The Secretary shall ensure
19 that amounts described in subparagraph (A) of paragraph
20 (2) for any fiscal year are consistent with amounts de-
21 scribed in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph for that
22 fiscal year.

23 “(2) Amounts referred to in paragraph (1) are the
24 following:

25 “(A) The amounts specified in program and
26 budget information submitted to Congress by the

1 Secretary in support of expenditure estimates and
2 proposed appropriations in the budget submitted to
3 Congress by the President under section 1105(a) of
4 title 31 for any fiscal year, as shown in the Future-
5 Years Veterans Program submitted pursuant to sub-
6 section (a).

7 “(B) The total amounts of estimated expendi-
8 tures and proposed appropriations necessary to sup-
9 port the programs, projects, and activities of the De-
10 partment of Veterans Affairs included pursuant to
11 paragraph (5) of section 1105(a) of title 31 in the
12 budget submitted to Congress under that section for
13 any fiscal year.

14 “(c) CONTENTS.—The Future-Years Veterans Pro-
15 gram under subsection (a) shall set forth the five-year
16 plan of the Department to address the commitment of the
17 United States to veterans and the resources necessary to
18 meet that commitment and shall be developed and up-
19 dated, as appropriate, annually by the Secretary. Each
20 Future-Years Veterans Program shall include an expla-
21 nation of—

22 “(1) the information that was used to develop
23 program planning guidance for the Future-Years
24 Veterans Program; and

1 “(2) how the resource allocations included in
2 the Future-Years Veterans Program correlate to
3 such five-year strategy.”.

4 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
5 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
6 by inserting after the item relating to section 118
7 the following new item:

“119. Future-Years Veterans Program.”.

8 (3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 119 of title 38,
9 United States Code, as added by paragraph (1),
10 shall apply with respect to the preparation and sub-
11 mission of the fiscal year 2018 budget request for
12 the Department of Veterans Affairs.

13 (b) QUADRENNIAL VETERANS REVIEW.—

14 (1) IN GENERAL.—Such chapter is further
15 amended by adding after section 119, as added by
16 subsection (a)(1), the following new section:

17 **“§ 120. Quadrennial veterans review**

18 “(a) REQUIREMENT.—(1) Not later than fiscal year
19 2017, and every fourth year thereafter, the Secretary shall
20 conduct a review of the strategy for meeting the commit-
21 ment of the United States to veterans and the resources
22 necessary to meet that commitment (in this section re-
23 ferred to as a ‘quadrennial veterans review’).

24 “(2) Each quadrennial veterans review shall include
25 a comprehensive examination of the policies and strategies

1 of the United States with respect to veterans, including
2 recommendations regarding the long-term strategy and
3 priorities for programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
4 regarding veterans and guidance on the programs, assets,
5 capabilities, budget, policies, and authorities of the De-
6 partment.

7 “(3) The Secretary shall conduct each quadrennial
8 veterans review in consultation with key officials of the
9 Department, the heads of other Federal agencies, and
10 other relevant governmental and nongovernmental enti-
11 ties, including State, local, and tribal government officials,
12 members of Congress, veterans service organizations, pri-
13 vate sector representatives, academics, and other policy ex-
14 perts.

15 “(4) The Secretary shall ensure that each quadren-
16 nial veterans review is coordinated with the Future-Years
17 Veterans Program required under section 119 of this title.

18 “(b) CONTENTS OF REVIEW.—In each quadrennial
19 veterans review, the Secretary shall—

20 “(1) delineate a veterans strategy consistent
21 with the commitment of the United States to vet-
22 erans and refine a strategy for the types of, and pro-
23 vision of, programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
24 consistent with current authorities and require-
25 ments;

1 “(2) outline and prioritize the full range of pro-
2 grams and capabilities regarding veterans provided
3 by the Federal Government;

4 “(3) identify the budget plan required to pro-
5 vide sufficient resources to successfully execute the
6 full range of such programs and capabilities;

7 “(4) include an assessment of the organiza-
8 tional alignment of the Department with respect to
9 the strategy referred to in paragraph (1) and the
10 programs and capabilities referred to in paragraph
11 (2);

12 “(5) review and assess the effectiveness of the
13 mechanisms of the Department for executing the
14 process of turning the requirements identified in the
15 quadrennial veterans review into a plan to meet such
16 requirements, including an expenditure plan for the
17 Department; and

18 “(6) identify emerging trends, problems, oppor-
19 tunities, and issues that could affect veterans or the
20 Department during the ten-year period following the
21 period covered by the review.

22 “(c) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—(1) The Secretary
23 shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of
24 the Senate and the House of Representatives a report re-
25 garding each quadrennial veterans review. The Secretary

1 shall submit the report in the year following the year in
2 which the review is conducted, but not later than the date
3 on which the President submits the budget for the next
4 fiscal year to Congress under section 1105 of title 31,
5 United States Code.

6 “(2) Each report submitted under paragraph (1)
7 shall include—

8 “(A) the results of the quadrennial veterans re-
9 view;

10 “(B) a description of the challenges to, and op-
11 portunities for, the assumed or defined veterans-re-
12 lated interests of the Nation that were examined for
13 the purposes of that review;

14 “(C) the strategy for meeting the Nation’s com-
15 mitment to veterans, including a prioritized list of
16 the missions of the Department;

17 “(D) a description of the interagency coopera-
18 tion, preparedness of Federal assets, infrastructure,
19 budget plan, and other elements of the programs
20 and policies of the Nation associated with the strat-
21 egy referred to in subsection (b)(1) that are required
22 to execute successfully the full range of programs
23 and capabilities identified in such strategy and the
24 programs and capabilities outlined under subsection
25 (b)(2);

1 “(E) an assessment of the organizational align-
2 ment of the Department with the strategy referred
3 to in subsection (b)(1) and the programs and capa-
4 bilities outlined under subsection (b)(2), including
5 the Department’s organizational structure, manage-
6 ment systems, budget and accounting systems,
7 human resources systems, procurement systems, and
8 physical and technical infrastructure;

9 “(F) a discussion of the status of cooperation
10 among Federal agencies in the effort to promote na-
11 tional support for veterans;

12 “(G) a discussion of the status of cooperation
13 between the Federal Government and State, local,
14 and tribal governments in supporting veterans and
15 providing programs, services, benefits, and outcomes
16 to assist veterans;

17 “(H) an explanation of any underlying assump-
18 tions used in conducting the review; and

19 “(I) any other matter the Secretary considers
20 appropriate.”.

21 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
22 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
23 by inserting after the item relating to section 119,
24 as added by subsection (a)(2), the following new
25 item:

“120. Quadrennial Veterans Review.”.

1 (c) POLICY GUIDANCE.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—Such chapter is further
3 amended by adding after section 120, as added by
4 subsection (b)(1), the following new section:

5 **“§ 121. Policy Guidance**

6 “The Secretary shall provide annually to the appro-
7 priate officials of the Department written policy guidance
8 for the preparation and review of the planning and pro-
9 gram recommendations and budget proposals of the ele-
10 ments of the Department of such officials. Such guidance
11 shall include guidance on the objectives of the Department
12 in accordance with Future-Years Veterans Program under
13 section 119 of this title and the quadrennial veterans re-
14 view under section 120 and the resource levels projected
15 to be available for the period of time for which such rec-
16 ommendations and proposals are to be effective.”.

17 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
18 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
19 by inserting after the item relating to section 120,
20 as added by subsection (b)(2), the following new
21 item:

“121. Quadrennial veterans review.”.

1 **SEC. 3. CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT**
2 **OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 38, United
4 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
5 lowing new section:

6 **“§ 323. Chief Strategy Officer**

7 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall designate
8 the Assistant Secretary whose functions include planning,
9 studies, and evaluations as the Chief Strategy Officer of
10 the Department. The Chief Strategy Officer shall advise
11 the Secretary on long-range strategy and implications.

12 “(b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Chief Strategy Officer
13 is the principal advisor to the Secretary and other senior
14 officials of the Department, and shall provide independent
15 analysis and advice to the Secretary and such officials.
16 The Chief Strategy Officer shall carry out the following
17 responsibilities:

18 “(1) Conducting cost estimation and cost anal-
19 ysis for the programs of the Department.

20 “(2) Establishing policies for, and overseeing
21 the integration of, the planning, programming,
22 budgeting and execution process for the Depart-
23 ment.

24 “(3) Providing analysis and advice on matters
25 relating to the planning and programming phase of
26 the planning, programming, budgeting and execution

1 process, and the preparation of materials and guid-
2 ance for such process, as directed by the Secretary,
3 working in coordination with the Assistant Secretary
4 for Management.

5 “(4) Developing and executing the Future-
6 Years Veterans Program of the Department, as
7 specified under section 119 of this title.

8 “(5) Developing resource discussions relating to
9 requirements under consideration in the quadrennial
10 veterans review under section 120 of this title.

11 “(6) Formulating study guidance for analysis of
12 alternatives for programs and initiatives, including
13 any necessary acquisitions, development, or procure-
14 ment commensurate with such alternatives, and per-
15 formance of such analysis as directed by the Sec-
16 retary.

17 “(7) Reviewing, analyzing, and evaluating pro-
18 grams for executing approved strategies and policies,
19 ensuring that information on programs and expected
20 outcomes is presented accurately and completely.

21 “(8) Ensuring that the costs of programs and
22 alternatives are presented accurately and completely
23 by assisting in establishing standards, policies, and
24 procedures for the conduct of cost estimation and
25 cost analysis throughout the Department, including

1 guidance relating to the proper selection of con-
2 fidence levels in cost estimates generally and for spe-
3 cific programs of the Department.

4 “(9) Conducting studies at the request of the
5 Secretary regarding costs, policy assumptions, and
6 strategic implications of current policies and possible
7 alternatives.

8 “(10) Communicating directly to the Secretary
9 and the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs about
10 matters for which the Chief Strategy Officer is re-
11 sponsible without obtaining the approval or concur-
12 rence of any other official within the Department.”.

13 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
14 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting
15 after the item relating to section 322 the following new
16 item:

“323. Chief Strategy Officer.”.

17 **SEC. 4. STUDY ON THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL**
18 **STRUCTURE OF THE OFFICE OF THE SEC-**
19 **RETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND OF THE**
20 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

21 (a) SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STUDY.—
22 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study
23 of the functions and organizational structure of the Office
24 of the Secretary and of the Department of Veterans Af-
25 fairs.

1 (b) CONTENTS OF STUDY.—In conducting the study
2 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall consider whether
3 the allocation of functions and the organizational struc-
4 ture of the Department, as of the date of the enactment
5 of this Act, constitute the most effective, efficient, and ec-
6 onomical allocation and structure to assist the Secretary
7 in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of the Sec-
8 retary. The Secretary shall also consider—

9 (1) whether the organization of the Office and
10 the Department is—

11 (A) optimally structured to assist the Sec-
12 retary in the effective exercise of control over
13 the Department, including—

14 (i) policy development and strategic
15 planning;

16 (ii) programming, planning, and budg-
17 et development and policy, program, and
18 budget execution; and

19 (iii) contingency planning; and

20 (B) the most effective and efficient organi-
21 zation for the initiation, development, and ar-
22 ticipation of veterans' policy and the provision
23 of benefits and services;

1 (2) means of improving and strengthening the
2 oversight and accountability within the Office and
3 Department;

4 (3) factors inhibiting efficient and effective exe-
5 cution of the functions of the Office and the Depart-
6 ment, including factors relating to—

7 (A) any duplication of functions (both
8 within and between the Office and Depart-
9 ment);

10 (B) the availability to the Secretary of suf-
11 ficient and detailed information regarding the
12 operation of the Department to enable effective
13 planning, policy execution, and oversight; and

14 (C) the sufficiency of resources, including
15 personnel, to carry out current and projected
16 requirements in a more effective and efficient
17 manner; and

18 (4) possible alternative allocations and realign-
19 ments of authorities and functions within the Office
20 and Department to improve the Department's over-
21 all operation and better provide benefits and serv-
22 ices.

23 (c) INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR STUDY.—The Sec-
24 retary shall enter into a contract with an appropriate enti-
25 ty under which the entity shall carry out an independent

1 study of the same matters required to be considered by
2 the Secretary under subsection (b). The Secretary shall
3 ensure that the entity has full access to such information
4 as the contractor requires in order to conduct the study
5 and that the contractor otherwise receives full cooperation
6 from all officials and entities of the Department of Vet-
7 erans Affairs.

8 (d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year
9 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
10 of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on
11 Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representa-
12 tives a report on the Secretary's study under subsection
13 (a). The report shall include—

14 (1) the findings and conclusions of the Sec-
15 retary with respect to each of the matters set forth
16 in subsection (b);

17 (2) any recommendations of the Secretary for
18 organizational changes in the Office of the Secretary
19 and the overall Department and a description of the
20 means for implementing each recommendation; and

21 (3) a copy of the report of the independent con-
22 tractor under subsection (c), together with such
23 comments on such report as the Secretary considers
24 appropriate.

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