

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5499

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expedite the processing of claims for disability compensation by veterans affected by major disasters.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 5, 2021

Mr. PANETTA (for himself, Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana, Miss RICE of New York, Mrs. AXNE, and Mr. LIEU) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expedite the processing of claims for disability compensation by veterans affected by major disasters.

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 “Priority Response for
5 Veterans Impacted by Disasters and Emergencies Act” or
6 the “PROVIDE Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The Department of Veterans Affairs sets
2 forth criteria for priority processing of veterans' dis-
3 ability claims by the Department.

4 (2) Such criteria include veterans affected by
5 extreme financial hardship, homelessness, terminal
6 illness, and participants in the Department's Fully
7 Developed Claim program.

8 (3) Currently there is no process in place to
9 prioritize the disability claims of veterans affected by
10 major disasters such as fires and floods.

11 (4) Priority claims processing for veterans af-
12 fected by major disasters will significantly help such
13 veterans begin rebuilding their lives.

14 **SEC. 3. PRIORITY CLAIMS PROCESSING IN THE EVENT OF A**
15 **MAJOR DISASTER.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall prescribe reg-
17 ulations setting forth criteria for priority processing of a
18 claim for compensation under chapter 11 of title 38,
19 United States Code. Individuals whose claim shall be eligi-
20 ble for such priority processing shall include—

21 (1) veterans affected by extreme financial hard-
22 ship;

23 (2) veterans affected by homelessness;

24 (3) veterans diagnosed with a terminal illness;

1 (4) participants in the Department of Veterans
2 Affairs Fully Developed Claim program; and

3 (5) veterans who live in an area for which the
4 President has declared a major disaster under sec-
5 tion 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief
6 and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170).

7 (b) SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CLAIMS PROC-
8 ESSING IN THE EVENT OF A MAJOR DISASTER.—The Sec-
9 retary shall prescribe additional regulations relating only
10 to subsection (a)(5). Such additional regulations include—

11 (1) establishing flexible evidence requirements
12 for veterans unable to meet the ordinary evidence re-
13 quirements for such a claim due to a major disaster;
14 and

15 (2) establishing a flexible filing deadline for
16 such a claim.

17 (c) NOTICE TO VETERANS OF ELIGIBILITY FOR PRI-
18 ORITY CLAIMS PROCESSING.—Not later than 60 days
19 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall
20 post a permanent notice to veterans on the Department
21 of Veterans Affairs website of the categories of eligibility
22 for priority processing of such claims, including the
23 changes to such categories made pursuant to subsection
24 (a).

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