

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3653

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out efforts to inform veterans of their rights with regards to the receipt of health care, benefits, and services furnished under provisions of law administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 15, 2026

Mrs. BLACKBURN (for herself, Mr. SHEEHY, Mr. TILLIS, and Mr. TUBERVILLE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out efforts to inform veterans of their rights with regards to the receipt of health care, benefits, and services furnished under provisions of law administered by the Secretary, 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 “Veterans’ Bill of
5 Rights Act of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The United States has a solemn obligation,
2 articulated by President Abraham Lincoln in 1865,
3 “to care for him who shall have borne the battle,
4 and for his widow, and his orphan”.

5 (2) Veterans transitioning to civilian life from
6 service in the Armed Forces deserve timely access to
7 health care, benefits, and information, as well as re-
8 spect, dignity, and transparency in all interactions
9 with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

10 (3) The responsibilities of the Secretary of Vet-
11 erans Affairs require that veterans’ rights be clearly
12 codified to ensure accountability and consistent na-
13 tionwide administration of benefits and services.

14 **SEC. 3. VETERANS’ BILL OF RIGHTS.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
16 shall carry out efforts to inform veterans of their rights
17 with regards to the receipt of health care, benefits, and
18 services furnished under provisions of law administered by
19 the Secretary.

20 (b) ELEMENTS.—In carrying out subsection (a), the
21 Secretary shall ensure that veterans are aware of their
22 rights with respect to the following:

23 (1) ACCESS TO VA OR VA-AUTHORIZED PRO-
24 VIDERS.—Veterans have the right to receive health
25 care from the Department of Veterans Affairs or,

1 when eligible under Federal law, from community
2 providers authorized by the Department.

3 (2) RESPECT AND DIGNITY.—The right to be
4 treated with courtesy, respect, and dignity in all
5 interactions with personnel of the Department.

6 (3) INFORMED CONSENT.—The right to receive
7 clear, complete information about treatment options
8 and to provide informed consent for care furnished
9 under laws administered by the Secretary.

10 (4) AWARENESS OF BENEFITS.—The right to
11 receive comprehensive, understandable information
12 about benefits, programs, and services for which the
13 veteran may be eligible or entitled under laws ad-
14 ministered by the Secretary.

15 (5) ACCESS TO BENEFITS.—The right to apply
16 for benefits furnished under provisions of law admin-
17 istered by the Secretary at any time and to receive
18 clear explanations from the Department regarding
19 eligibility determinations concerning such benefits.

20 (6) HEALTH CARE WITHOUT RETALIATION.—
21 The right to seek care or raise concerns without fear
22 of stigma, retaliation, or adverse action from the De-
23 partment.

24 (7) PRIVACY.—The right to the protection of
25 personal information and medical records consistent

1 with provisions of Federal law relating to privacy,
2 protection of personal information, and medical
3 records.

4 (8) RIGHT TO GRIEVANCE REDRESS.—The right
5 to file complaints concerning services furnished by
6 the Department and to receive timely, thorough in-
7 vestigation and resolution of those complaints.

8 (9) TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION.—The
9 right to clear written notification from the Depart-
10 ment regarding the status of claims, benefits, and
11 appeals filed with the Department.

12 (10) APPEAL AND FAIR HEARING.—The right
13 to appeal adverse decisions of the Secretary and to
14 receive fair hearings from the Department within a
15 reasonable time.

16 (c) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Secretary shall—

17 (1) integrate the rights described in subsection
18 (b) into all Department of Veterans Affairs policies,
19 directives, patient-facing materials, and employee
20 training programs;

21 (2) ensure every employee of the Department
22 receives annual training on such rights;

23 (3) prominently display such rights at all De-
24 partment facilities and the website of the Depart-
25 ment;

1 (4) in coordination with the Secretary of De-
2 fense and the Secretary of Labor, include a dedi-
3 cated instruction module on the rights described in
4 subsection (b) as part of the curriculum for the
5 Transition Assistance Program (TAP) under section
6 1144 of title 10, United States Code;

7 (5) not later than 180 days after the date of
8 the enactment of this Act, ensure that the rights de-
9 scribed in subsection (b) are accessible through a
10 prominent, dedicated feature within the official mo-
11 bile application of the Department of Veterans Af-
12 fairs and the eBenefits portal (or any successor per-
13 sonal benefits portal);

14 (6) require each Department medical facility to
15 designate a patient advocate or ombudsman to con-
16 duct an annual internal audit to assess facility com-
17 pliance with the rights described in subsection (b),
18 including a review of veteran satisfaction surveys
19 and the timeliness of grievance resolutions; and

20 (7) ensure that any written or electronic ac-
21 knowledgegment of a claim for benefits or an applica-
22 tion for health care services includes a summary
23 statement of the rights described in subsection (b),
24 emphasizing the veteran's right to transparent com-
25 munication and grievance redress.

1 (d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—The provisions of
2 this section shall not be construed—

3 (1) to create a cause of action for damages or
4 judicially enforceable rights beyond those already es-
5 tablished under Federal law; or

6 (2) to alter statutory eligibility requirements for
7 care or benefits furnished under laws administered
8 by the Secretary.

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