

PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS' BENEFITS ACT

[Title I of Public Law 103–446, approved Nov. 2, 1994]

[As Amended Through P.L. 115–182, Enacted June 6, 2018]

【Currency: This publication is a compilation of the text of title I of Public Law 103–446. It was last amended by the public law listed in the As Amended Through note above and below at the bottom of each page of the pdf version and reflects current law through the date of the enactment of the public law listed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/comps/>】

【Note: While this publication does not represent an official version of any Federal statute, substantial efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of its contents. The official version of Federal law is found in the United States Statutes at Large and in the United States Code. The legal effect to be given to the Statutes at Large and the United States Code is established by statute (1 U.S.C. 112, 204).】

TITLE I—PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS

SEC. 101. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Persian Gulf War Veterans’ Benefits Act”.

SEC. 102. [38 U.S.C. 1117 note] FINDINGS.

The Congress makes the following findings:

(1) During the Persian Gulf War, members of the Armed Forces were exposed to numerous potentially toxic substances, including fumes and smoke from military operations, oil well fires, diesel exhaust, paints, pesticides, depleted uranium, infectious agents, investigational drugs and vaccines, and indigenous diseases, and were also given multiple immunizations. It is not known whether these servicemembers were exposed to chemical or biological warfare agents. However, threats of enemy use of chemical and biological warfare heightened the psychological stress associated with the military operation.

(2) Significant numbers of veterans of the Persian Gulf War are suffering from illnesses, or are exhibiting symptoms of illness, that cannot now be diagnosed or clearly defined. As a result, many of these conditions or illnesses are not considered to be service connected under current law for purposes of benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(3) The National Institutes of Health Technology Assessment Workshop on the Persian Gulf Experience and Health, held in April 1994, concluded that the complex biological, chemical, physical, and psychological environment of the Southwest Asia theater of operations produced complex adverse health effects in Persian Gulf War veterans and that no single disease entity or syndrome is apparent. Rather, it may be that the illnesses suffered by those veterans result from

multiple illnesses with overlapping symptoms and causes that have yet to be defined.

(4) That workshop concluded that the information concerning the range and intensity of exposure to toxic substances by military personnel in the Southwest Asia theater of operations is very limited and that such information was collected only after a considerable delay.

(5) In response to concerns regarding the health-care needs of Persian Gulf War veterans, particularly those who suffer from illnesses or conditions for which no diagnosis has been made, the Congress, in Public Law 102-585, directed the establishment of a Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Registry, authorized health examinations for veterans of the Persian Gulf War, and provided for the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of information regarding the health consequences of military service in the Persian Gulf theater of operations and to develop recommendations on avenues for research regarding such health consequences. In Public Law 103-210, the Congress authorized the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide health care services on a priority basis to Persian Gulf War veterans. The Congress also provided in Public Law 103-160 (the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994) for the establishment of a specialized environmental medical facility for the conduct of research into the possible health effects of exposure to low levels of hazardous chemicals, especially among Persian Gulf veterans, and for research into the possible health effects of battlefield exposure in such veterans to depleted uranium.

(6) In response to concerns about the lack of objective research on Gulf War illnesses, Congress included research provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995, which was passed by the House and Senate in September 1994. This legislation requires the Secretary of Defense to provide research grants to non-Federal researchers to support three types of studies of the Gulf War syndrome. The first type of study will be an epidemiological study or studies of the incidence, prevalence, and nature of the illness and symptoms and the risk factors associated with symptoms or illnesses. This will include illnesses among spouses and birth defects and illnesses among offspring born before and after the Gulf War. The second group of studies shall be conducted to determine the health consequences of the use of pyridostigmine bromide as a pretreatment antidote enhancer during the Persian Gulf War, alone or in combination with exposure to pesticides, environmental toxins, and other hazardous substances. The final group of studies shall include clinical research and other studies on the causes, possible transmission, and treatment of Gulf War syndrome, and will include studies of veterans and their spouses and children.

(7) Further research and studies must be undertaken to determine the underlying causes of the illnesses suffered by Persian Gulf War veterans and, pending the outcome of such research, veterans who are seriously ill as the result of such illnesses should be given the benefit of the doubt and be pro-

vided compensation benefits to offset the impairment in earnings capacities they may be experiencing.

SEC. 103. [38 U.S.C. 1117 note] PURPOSES.

The purposes of this title are—

(1) to provide compensation to Persian Gulf War veterans who suffer disabilities resulting from illnesses that cannot now be diagnosed or defined, and for which other causes cannot be identified;

(2) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop at the earliest possible date case assessment strategies and definitions or diagnoses of such illnesses;

(3) to promote greater outreach to Persian Gulf War veterans and their families to inform them of ongoing research activities, as well as the services and benefits to which they are currently entitled; and

(4) to ensure that research activities and accompanying surveys of Persian Gulf War veterans are appropriately funded and undertaken by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 104. [38 U.S.C. 1117 note] DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL EVALUATION PROTOCOL.

(a) **UNIFORM MEDICAL EVALUATION PROTOCOL.**—(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and implement a uniform and comprehensive medical evaluation protocol that will ensure appropriate medical assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of Persian Gulf War veterans who are suffering from illnesses the origins of which are (as of the date of the enactment of this Act) unknown and that may be attributable to service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War. The protocol shall include an evaluation of complaints relating to illnesses involving the reproductive system.

(2) If such a protocol is not implemented before the end of the 120-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall, before the end of such period, submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report as to why such a protocol has not yet been developed.

(3)(A) The Secretary shall ensure that the evaluation under the protocol developed under this section is available at all Department medical centers that have the capability of providing the medical assessment, diagnosis, and treatment required under the protocol.

(B) The Secretary may enter into contracts with non-Department medical facilities for the provision of the evaluation under the protocol.

(C) In the case of a veteran whose residence is distant from a medical center described in subparagraph (A), the Secretary may provide the evaluation through a Department medical center described in that subparagraph and, in such a case, may provide the veteran the travel and incidental expenses therefor pursuant to the provisions of section 111 of title 38, United States Code.

(4)(A) If the Secretary is unable to diagnose the symptoms or illness of a veteran provided an evaluation, or if the symptoms or illness of a veteran do not respond to treatment provided by the

Secretary, the Secretary may use the authority in section 1703¹ of title 38, United States Code, in order to provide for the veteran to receive diagnostic tests or treatment at a non-Department medical facility that may have the capability of diagnosing or treating the symptoms or illness of the veteran. The Secretary may provide the veteran the travel and incidental expenses therefor pursuant to the provisions of section 111 of title 38, United States Code.

(B) The Secretary shall request from each non-Department medical facility that examines or treats a veteran under this paragraph such information relating to the diagnosis or treatment as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(5) In each year after the implementation of the protocol, the Secretary shall enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences under which agreement appropriate experts shall review the adequacy of the protocol and its implementation by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER COMPREHENSIVE CLINICAL EVALUATION PROTOCOLS.**—The Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall ensure that the information collected through the protocol described in this section is collected and maintained in a manner that permits the effective and efficient cross-reference of that information with information collected and maintained through the comprehensive clinical protocols of the Department of Defense for Persian Gulf War veterans.

(c) **CASE DEFINITIONS AND DIAGNOSES.**—The Secretary shall develop case definitions or diagnoses for illnesses associated with the service described in subsection (a)(1). The Secretary shall develop such definitions or diagnoses at the earliest possible date.

SEC. 105. [38 U.S.C. 1117 note] OUTREACH TO PERSIAN GULF VETERANS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement a comprehensive outreach program to inform Persian Gulf War veterans and their families of the medical care and other benefits that may be provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense arising from service in the Persian Gulf War.

(b) **NEWSLETTER.**—(1) The outreach program shall include a newsletter which shall be updated and distributed at least semi-annually and shall be distributed to the veterans listed on the Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Registry. The newsletter shall include summaries of the status and findings of Government sponsored research on illnesses of Persian Gulf War veterans and their families, as well as on benefits available to such individuals through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The newsletter shall be prepared in consultation with veterans service organizations.

(2) The requirement under this subsection for the distribution of the newsletter shall terminate on December 31, 2003.

¹ Section 144(a)(3) of Public Law 115-182 provides for an amendment to strike “in section 1703” and insert “in sections 1703A, 8111, and 8153”. Subsection (b) of such section 144 provides “[t]he amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date described in section 101(b)”. Paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 101(b) of such Public Law provides: “(1) the date that is 30 days after the date on which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submits the report required under section 101(g)(2) of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146; 38 U.S.C. 1701 note); or (2) the date on which the Secretary promulgates regulations pursuant to subsection (c).”.

(c) **TOLL-FREE NUMBER.**—The outreach program shall include establishment of a toll-free telephone number to provide Persian Gulf War veterans and their families information on the Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Registry, health care and other benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and such other information as the Secretary considers appropriate. Such toll-free telephone number shall be established not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 106. COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR DISABILITY RESULTING FROM ILLNESS ATTRIBUTED TO SERVICE DURING THE PERSIAN GULF WAR.

【Omitted—Amendments】

SEC. 107. [38 U.S.C. 1117 note] EVALUATION OF HEALTH STATUS OF SPOUSES AND CHILDREN OF PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS.

(a) **EVALUATION PROGRAM.**—Subject to subsection (c), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a program to evaluate the health status of spouses and children of Persian Gulf War veterans. Under the program, the Secretary shall provide for the conduct of diagnostic testing and appropriate medical examinations of any individual—

- (1) who is the spouse or child of a veteran who—
 - (A) is listed in the Persian Gulf War Veterans Registry established under section 702 of Public Law 102–585; and
 - (B) is suffering from an illness or disorder;
- (2) who is apparently suffering from, or may have suffered from, an illness or disorder (including a birth defect, miscarriage, or stillbirth) which cannot be disassociated from the veteran's service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations; and
- (3) who, in the case of a spouse, has granted the Secretary permission to include in the Registry relevant medical data (including a medical history and the results of diagnostic testing and medical examinations) and such other information as the Secretary considers relevant and appropriate with respect to such individual.

(b) **DURATION OF PROGRAM.**—The program shall be carried out during the period beginning on November 1, 1994, and ending on September 30, 2003.

(c) **FUNDING LIMITATION.**—The amount spent for the program under subsection (a) may not exceed \$2,000,000.

(d) **CONTRACTING.**—The Secretary may provide for the conduct of testing and examinations under subsection (a) through appropriate contract arrangements, including fee arrangements described in section 1703 of title 38, United States Code.

(e) **STANDARD PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES.**—The Secretary shall seek to ensure uniform development of medical data through the development of standard protocols and guidelines for such testing and examinations. If such protocols and guidelines have not been adopted before the end of the 120-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall, before the end of such period, submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report as to why such protocols and guidelines have not yet been developed.

(f) ENTRY OF RESULTS IN REGISTRY.—The results of diagnostic tests, medical histories, and medical examinations conducted under subsection (a) shall be entered into the Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Registry.

(g) OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall conduct such outreach activities as the Secretary determines necessary for the purposes of the program. In conducting such outreach activities, the Secretary shall advise that medical treatment is not available under the program.

(h) USE OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT OF STANDARD PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES.—The Secretary shall—

(1) make the standard protocols and guidelines developed under this section available to any entity which requests a copy of such protocols and guidelines; and

(2) enter into the registry the results of any examination of the spouse or child of a veteran who served in the Persian Gulf theater which a licensed physician certifies was conducted using those standard protocols and guidelines.

(i) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than July 31, 1999, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on activities with respect to the program, including the provision of services under subsection (d).

(j) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section, the terms “child” and “spouse” have the meanings given those terms in paragraphs (4) and (31), respectively, of section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 108. CLARIFICATION OF SCOPE OF HEALTH EXAMINATIONS PROVIDED FOR VETERANS ELIGIBLE FOR INCLUSION IN HEALTH-RELATED REGISTRIES.

[Omitted—Amendments]

SEC. 109. [38 U.S.C. 1117 note] SURVEY OF PERSIAN GULF VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out a survey of Persian Gulf veterans to gather information on the incidence and nature of health problems occurring in Persian Gulf veterans and their families.

(b) COORDINATION WITH DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.—Any survey under subsection (a) shall be carried out in coordination with the Secretary of Defense.

(c) PERSIAN GULF VETERAN.—For purposes of this section, a Persian Gulf veteran is an individual who served on active duty in the Armed Forces in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War as defined in section 101(33) of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 110. [38 U.S.C. 1117 note] AUTHORIZATION FOR EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDIES.

(a) STUDY OF HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF PERSIAN GULF SERVICE.—If the National Academy of Sciences includes in the report required by section 706(b) of the Veterans Health Care Act of 1992 (Public Law 102–585) a finding that there is a sound basis for an epidemiological study or studies on the health consequences of service in the Persian Gulf theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War and recommends the conduct of such a study or studies,

the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is authorized to carry out such study.

(b) OVERSIGHT.—(1) The Secretary shall seek to enter into an agreement with the Medical Follow-Up Agency (MFUA) of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences for (A) the review of proposals to conduct the research referred to in subsection (a), (B) oversight of such research, and (C) review of the research findings.

(2) If the Secretary is unable to enter into an agreement under paragraph (1) with the entity specified in that paragraph, the Secretary shall enter into an agreement described in that paragraph with another appropriate scientific organization which does not have a connection to the Department of Veterans Affairs. In such a case, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives, at least 90 days before the date on which the agreement is entered into, notice in writing identifying the organization with which the Secretary intends to enter into the agreement.

(c) ACCESS TO DATA.—The Secretary shall enter into agreements with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make available for the purposes of any study described in subsection (a) all data that the Secretary, in consultation with the National Academy of Sciences and the contractor for the study, considers relevant to the study.

(d) AUTHORIZATION.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Department such sums as are necessary for the conduct of studies described in subsection (a).

SEC. 111. COST-SAVINGS PROVISIONS.

【Omitted—Amendments】