

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 543

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reorganize the Veterans Integrated Service Networks of the Veterans Health Administration, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 13, 2013

Mr. BURR (for himself and Mr. COBURN) 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 reorganize the Veterans Integrated Service Networks of the Veterans Health Administration, 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 “VISN Reorganization
5 Act of 2013”.

6 **SEC. 2. ADMINISTRATION OF VETERANS INTEGRATED**
7 **SERVICE NETWORKS.**

8 (a) VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 73
2 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by add-
3 ing at the end the following new section:

4 **“§ 7310. Veterans Integrated Service Networks**

5 “(a) ORGANIZATION.—The Secretary shall organize
6 the Veterans Health Administration in 12 geographically
7 defined Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

8 “(b) ALIGNMENT WITH MISSION OF DEPART-
9 MENT.—The Secretary shall ensure that the staff, serv-
10 ices, and programs of each Veterans Integrated Service
11 Network are aligned with the mission of the Department
12 and the specific health care requirements of each popu-
13 lation of veterans in each Network.

14 “(c) IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL GOALS.—The
15 Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Serv-
16 ice Network takes appropriate measures to implement the
17 national goals of the Department within their networks
18 and associated medical centers.

19 “(d) INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.—The
20 Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Serv-
21 ice Network maintains a regional integrated healthcare
22 system by—

23 “(1) implementing alliances with such other
24 governmental, public, and private health care organi-
25 zations and practitioners as the Secretary considers

1 appropriate to meet the needs of veterans in the
2 Network;

3 “(2) providing oversight and management of,
4 and taking responsibility for, a regional budget for
5 the activities of the Veterans Health Administration
6 in the geographic area of the Network that—

7 “(A) is aligned with the budget guidelines
8 of the Department and the Veterans Health
9 Administration; and

10 “(B) is balanced at the end of each fiscal
11 year;

12 “(3) using national metrics to develop systems
13 to provide effective, efficient, and safe delivery of
14 health care that is rated as highly satisfactory by
15 patients and families of patients; and

16 “(4) ensuring high quality clinical programs
17 and services are rendered in and through—

18 “(A) the medical centers and outpatient
19 clinics of the Department that are located in
20 the Network; and

21 “(B) other non-Department clinical or
22 health care delivery settings located in the Net-
23 work.

24 “(e) REDUCTION IN DUPLICATE FUNCTIONS.—The
25 Secretary shall ensure that the Veterans Integrated Serv-

1 ice Networks identify and reduce, whenever practicable,
2 the duplication of functions in clinical, administrative, and
3 operational processes and practices of the Veterans Health
4 Administration.

5 “(f) COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION.—The Sec-
6 retary shall ensure that each Veteran Integrated Service
7 Network—

8 “(1) works to achieve maximum effectiveness in
9 patient care and safety, graduate medical education,
10 and research; and

11 “(2) assesses the consolidation or realignment
12 of institutional functions, including capital asset,
13 safety, and operational support functions, in collabo-
14 ration and cooperation with other Veterans Inte-
15 grated Service Networks and the following offices or
16 entities within the geographical area of the Network:

17 “(A) The offices of the Veterans Benefits
18 Administration and the National Cemetery Ad-
19 ministration.

20 “(B) The offices, installations, and facili-
21 ties of the Department of Defense, including
22 the offices, installations, and facilities of each
23 branch of the Armed Forces and the reserve
24 components of the Armed Forces.

1 “(C) The offices, installations, and facili-
2 ties of the Coast Guard.

3 “(D) Offices of State and local agencies
4 that have a mission to provide assistance to vet-
5 erans.

6 “(E) Medical schools and other affiliates.

7 “(F) Offices of Congress, offices of State
8 and local elected officials, and other government
9 offices.

10 “(G) Federal, State and local emergency
11 preparedness organizations.

12 “(H) Community and faith-based organiza-
13 tions.

14 “(I) Such other offices of the Federal Gov-
15 ernment as the Secretary considers appropriate.

16 “(g) DEVELOPMENT AND SHARING OF INNOVATIONS
17 AND PRACTICES.—The Secretary shall ensure that the
18 Veterans Integrated Service Networks develop and share
19 innovations and best practices with each other at the local,
20 regional, and national levels.

21 “(h) HEADQUARTERS.—(1) The Secretary shall en-
22 sure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network has
23 only one headquarters office.

24 “(2) The location of a headquarters office for a Vet-
25 erans Integrated Service Network shall be determined by

1 the Secretary and co-located with a Department of Vet-
2 erans Affairs medical center.

3 “(3)(A) The Secretary may employ or contract for
4 the services of not more than 65 full time equivalent em-
5 ployees and contractors at the headquarters of each Vet-
6 erans Integrated Service Network.

7 “(B) Not less frequently than once each year, the
8 Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans’ Af-
9 fairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Af-
10 fairs of the House of Representatives a report on employ-
11 ment at the headquarters of Veterans Integrated Service
12 Networks during the most recently completed fiscal year.

13 “(C) Each report submitted under subparagraph (B)
14 shall include the following for the year covered by the re-
15 port:

16 “(i) The number of individuals employed at
17 each headquarters of a Veterans Integrated Service
18 Network.

19 “(ii) The number of individuals employed by the
20 Veterans Health Administration in each Veterans
21 Integrated Service Network who are not employed at
22 the same location as the headquarters of the Net-
23 work.

1 “(iii) The title for each position of employment
2 at a headquarters of a Veterans Integrated Service
3 Network.

4 “(iv) The title for each position of employment
5 with the Veterans Health Administration in each
6 Veterans Integrated Service Network that is not at
7 the same location as the headquarters of the Net-
8 work.

9 “(v) An assessment of the impact on the budget
10 of the Department by the employment of individuals
11 at the headquarters of the Veterans Integrated Serv-
12 ice Networks.

13 “(i) TRIENNIAL STRUCTURE REVIEW, REASSESS-
14 MENT, AND REPORT.—(1) Beginning three years after the
15 date of the enactment of this section and not less fre-
16 quently than once every three years thereafter, the Sec-
17 retary shall conduct a review and assessment of the struc-
18 ture and operations of the Veterans Integrated Service
19 Networks.

20 “(2) Not later than 180 days after conducting a re-
21 view and assessment under paragraph (1), the Secretary
22 shall submit to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the
23 Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the
24 House of Representatives a report on such review and as-
25 sessment, which shall include such recommendations for

1 legislative or regulatory action as the Secretary considers
 2 appropriate to improve the Veterans Integrated Service
 3 Networks.”.

4 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
 5 tions at the beginning of chapter 73 of such title is
 6 amended by inserting after the item relating to sec-
 7 tion 7309 the following new item:

“7310. Veterans Integrated Service Networks.”.

8 (b) CONSOLIDATION OF NETWORKS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—In order to comply with sec-
 10 tion 7310(a) of title 38, United States Code, as
 11 added by subsection (a), not later than one year
 12 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
 13 retary of Veterans Affairs shall geographically re-
 14 align and combine the 21 Veterans Integrated Serv-
 15 ice Networks in effect on the day before the date of
 16 the enactment of this Act into 12 geographically de-
 17 fined Veterans Integrated Service Networks as fol-
 18 lows:

19 (A) Veterans Integrated Service Network
 20 1, Veterans Integrated Service Network 2, and
 21 Veterans Integrated Service Network 3 shall be
 22 combined into a single Veterans Integrated
 23 Service Network.

24 (B) Veterans Integrated Service Network 4
 25 and Veterans Integrated Service Network 5

1 shall be combined into a single Veterans Inte-
2 grated Service Network.

3 (C) Veterans Integrated Service Network 9
4 and Veterans Integrated Service Network 10
5 shall be combined into a single Veterans Inte-
6 grated Service Network.

7 (D) Veterans Integrated Service Network
8 11 and Veterans Integrated Service Network 12
9 shall be combined into a single Veterans Inte-
10 grated Service Network.

11 (E) Veterans Integrated Service Network
12 15 and Veterans Integrated Service Network 23
13 shall be combined into a single Veterans Inte-
14 grated Service Network.

15 (F) Veterans Integrated Service Network
16 17 and Veterans Integrated Service Network 18
17 shall be combined into a single Veterans Inte-
18 grated Service Network.

19 (G) Veterans Integrated Service Network
20 19 and Veterans Integrated Service Network 20
21 shall be combined into a single Veterans Inte-
22 grated Service Network.

23 (H) Veterans Integrated Service Network
24 21 and Veterans Integrated Service Network 22

1 shall be combined into a single Veterans Inte-
2 grated Service Network.

3 (2) CONSOLIDATION OF HEADQUARTERS.—

4 (A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in
5 subsection (c), for each set of Veterans Inte-
6 grated Service Networks consolidated under
7 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall retain one of
8 the headquarters of such set in effect on the
9 day before the date of the enactment of this Act
10 in the same location as in effect on the day be-
11 fore such date and eliminate any other head-
12 quarters of such set to meet the requirements
13 of section 7310(h) of such title, as added by
14 subsection (a).

15 (B) REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE.—For
16 each individual whose position of employment is
17 eliminated as a result of eliminating a head-
18 quarters under subparagraph (A), the Secretary
19 shall take such measures as the Secretary con-
20 siderers practicable to find a new position of em-
21 ployment for such individual within the Depart-
22 ment of Veterans Affairs.

23 (3) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—Not later than
24 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
25 the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Vet-

1 erans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on
2 Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a
3 plan to carry out this subsection.

4 (c) RELOCATION OF HEADQUARTERS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a head-
6 quarters office of a Veterans Integrated Service Net-
7 work that on the day before the date of the enact-
8 ment of this Act was in a location that was not co-
9 located with a Department of Veterans Affairs med-
10 ical center and the Secretary is engaged in a lease
11 for such location, the Secretary may—

12 (A) relocate such headquarters upon the
13 expiration of such lease so that such head-
14 quarters is co-located as required by section
15 7310(h)(2) of such title, as added by subsection
16 (a); or

17 (B) notwithstanding section 7310(h)(2) of
18 such title, as so added, renew such lease or
19 enter into a new lease to keep such head-
20 quarters in such location.

21 (2) REPORT.—If the Secretary renews a lease
22 or engages in a new lease under paragraph (1)(B),
23 the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Vet-
24 erans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on
25 Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives,

1 before renewing such lease or engaging in such
 2 lease, a report describing the reasons for such re-
 3 newal or engagement. Such report shall include the
 4 following:

5 (A) A list of Department of Veterans Af-
 6 fairs medical centers in the Veterans Integrated
 7 Service Network of the headquarters with un-
 8 derutilized buildings, the number of such build-
 9 ings, and the total underutilized square footage
 10 for each such medical center.

11 (B) The cost of the current lease (the an-
 12 nual amount of rent, the total cost over the life
 13 of the lease, and the total cost per square foot)
 14 and the current square footage being leased.

15 (C) The cost of the new lease (the annual
 16 amount of rent, the total cost over the life of
 17 the lease, and the total cost per square foot)
 18 and the square footage to be leased.

19 **SEC. 3. REGIONAL SUPPORT CENTERS FOR VETERANS IN-**
 20 **TEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.**

21 (a) REGIONAL SUPPORT CENTERS.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 73
 23 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by sec-
 24 tion 2(a), is further amended by adding at the end
 25 the following new section:

1 **“§ 7310A. Regional support centers for Veterans Inte-**
2 **grated Service Networks**

3 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall estab-
4 lish not more than four regional support centers within
5 the Veterans Health Administration to assess the effec-
6 tiveness and efficiency of the Veterans Integrated Service
7 Networks. The head of each regional support center shall
8 report to the Under Secretary of Health.

9 “(b) FUNCTIONS.—The functions of the regional sup-
10 port centers established under subsection (a) are as fol-
11 lows:

12 “(1) To assess the quality of work performed
13 within finance operations and other compliance re-
14 lated activities of the Veterans Integrated Service
15 Networks.

16 “(2) To assess how effectively and efficiently
17 each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts
18 outreach to veterans who served in Operation En-
19 during Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Oper-
20 ation New Dawn, or another contingency operation
21 (as defined in section 101 of title 10).

22 “(3) To assess how effectively and efficiently
23 each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts
24 programs for the benefit of women veterans.

25 “(4) To assess how effectively and efficiently
26 each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts

1 programs that address homelessness among vet-
2 erans.

3 “(5) To assess how effectively and efficiently
4 each Veterans Integrated Service Network consumes
5 energy.

6 “(6) To assess such other matters concerning
7 the operations and activities of the Veterans Inte-
8 grated Service Networks as the Secretary considers
9 appropriate.

10 “(c) STAFF.—The Secretary may hire such employ-
11 ees and contractors as the Secretary considers appropriate
12 to carry out the functions of the regional support centers.

13 “(d) LOCATION OF REGIONAL SUPPORT CENTERS.—
14 (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the location of
15 each regional support center established under subsection
16 (a) shall be determined by the Secretary and co-located
17 with a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center.

18 “(2) The Secretary may choose a location for a re-
19 gional support center established under subsection (a) that
20 is not co-located with a Department of Veterans Affairs
21 medical center if the Secretary submits to the Committee
22 on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on
23 Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives, before
24 engaging in a lease for such location, a report explaining
25 the reasons for the choice of the Secretary of a location

1 for the regional support center that is not co-located with
 2 a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center. Such
 3 report shall include the following:

4 “(A) A list of Department of Veterans Affairs
 5 medical centers in the Veterans Integrated Service
 6 Network of the regional support center with under-
 7 utilized buildings, the number of all Veterans Health
 8 Administration buildings in such Network, and the
 9 total underutilized square footage for each medical
 10 center in such Network.

11 “(B) In the case that the Secretary engages in
 12 a lease for the location of the regional support cen-
 13 ter, the cost of such lease (the annual amount of
 14 rent, the total cost over the life of the lease, and the
 15 total cost per square foot) and the square footage to
 16 be leased.”.

17 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
 18 tions at the beginning of chapter 73 of such title, as
 19 amended by section 2(a)(2), is further amended by
 20 inserting after the item relating to section 7310 the
 21 following new item:

“7310A. Regional support centers for Veterans Integrated Service Networks.”.

22 (b) INITIAL STAFFING.—In providing for the initial
 23 staff of each regional support center established under sec-
 24 tion 7310A(a) of title 38, United States Code, as added
 25 by subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall,

1 to the extent practicable, transfer employees who were em-
2 ployed in positions at headquarters of Veterans Integrated
3 Service Networks that covered functions similar to those
4 described in section 7310A(b) of such title, as so added,
5 from such headquarters to regional support centers.

6 **SEC. 4. CONSTRUCTION.**

7 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to require any
8 change in the location or type of medical care or service
9 provided by a Department of Veterans Affairs medical
10 center, a Department community-based outpatient clinic,
11 a center for readjustment counseling and related mental
12 health services for veterans under section 1712A of title
13 38, United States Code (known as a “vet center”), or an-
14 other facility that provides direct care or services under
15 a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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