

Public Law 117–313
117th Congress

An Act

To amend title 38, United States Code, to shorten the timeframe for designation of benefits under Department of Veterans Affairs life insurance programs, to improve the treatment of undisbursed life insurance benefits by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Dec. 27, 2022
[H.R. 8260]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Faster Payments to Veterans’ Survivors Act of 2022”.

Faster Payments
to Veterans’
Survivors Act of
2022.
38 USC 101 note.

SEC. 2. TIMEFRAME FOR DESIGNATION OF ALTERNATE BENEFICIARIES AND PAYMENT OF BENEFITS UNDER DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAMS.

(a) NATIONAL SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE.—Section 1917(f)(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking “two years” and inserting “one year”; and

(2) in subparagraph (B), by striking “four” and inserting “two”.

(b) UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT LIFE INSURANCE.—Section 1952(c)(1) of such title is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking “two years” and inserting “one year”; and

(2) in subparagraph (B), by striking “four” and inserting “two”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to the death of an insured person occurring on or after the date that is two years before the date of the enactment of this Act.

38 USC 1917
note.

SEC. 3. BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION PROCESS UNDER DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAMS.

(a) NSLI.—Section 1917 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking subsection (a) and inserting the following:

“(a)(1) A person who enrolls in insurance maturing on or after August 1, 1946, may designate a beneficiary of the insurance policy. The insured shall, subject to regulations, at all times have the right to change the beneficiary or beneficiaries of such insurance without the consent of such beneficiary or beneficiaries.

“(2) If a person enrolled in insurance maturing on or after August 1, 1946, does not designate a beneficiary under paragraph (1) before the veteran dies, or if a designated beneficiary predeceases

Determination.

the veteran, the Secretary shall determine the beneficiary in the following order:

“(A) The surviving spouse of the insured person.

“(B) The children of the insured person and descendants of deceased children by representation.

“(C) The parents of the insured person or the survivors of the parents.

“(D) The duly appointed executor or administrator of the estate of the insured person.

“(E) Other next of kin of the insured person entitled under the laws of domicile of the insured person at the time of the death of the insured person.”.

(b) USGLI.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 1949 of such title is amended to read as follows:

“§ 1949. Beneficiaries

“(a) DESIGNATION.—A person who enrolls in United States Government life insurance may designate a beneficiary of the insurance policy. Subject to regulations, the insured person shall at all times have the right to change the beneficiary or beneficiaries of a United States Government life insurance policy without the consent of such beneficiary or beneficiaries.

“(b) DETERMINATION IN CASES OF NON-DESIGNATION.—If a person enrolled in United States Government life insurance does not designate a beneficiary under subsection (a) before the insured person dies, or if a designated beneficiary predeceases the insured person, the Secretary shall determine the beneficiary in the following order:

“(1) The surviving spouse of the insured person.

“(2) The children of the insured person and descendants of deceased children by representation.

“(3) The parents of the insured person or the survivors of the parents.

“(4) The duly appointed executor or administrator of the estate of the insured person.

“(5) Other next of kin of the insured person entitled under the laws of domicile of the insured person at the time of the death of the insured person.”.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 19 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to section 1949 and inserting the following new item:

“1949. Beneficiaries.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to the death of an insured person occurring on or after the date that is two years before the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 4. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IMPROVEMENT OF TREATMENT OF UNDISBURSED LIFE INSURANCE BENEFITS.

(a) IMPROVEMENT OF PROCESSES.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall improve the processes and procedures of the Department of Veterans Affairs with respect to identifying, locating, and paying hard-to-find beneficiaries of life insurance policies issued under chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code, including by—

38 USC
prec. 1901.

38 USC 1917
note.

38 USC note
prec. 1981.

(1) improving the search tools available on the website of the Department;

(2) conducting outreach to veterans, veterans service organizations, and the general public with respect to such search tools;

(3) improving the processes for searching for information relating to potential recipients through internal Department sources and sources available through other Federal agencies, State government agencies, and non-government entities; and

(4) ensuring the Department has sufficient dedicated staff whose primary responsibilities are identifying, locating, and paying hard-to-find beneficiaries, with the goal of disbursing by not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, all funds that, as of the date of the enactment of this Act, are owed to a beneficiary of a life insurance policy issued under chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code.

Deadline.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs should work with interagency partners to determine the types of records, reports, and other materials that may be required to identify, locate, and disburse undisbursed life insurance benefits to hard-to-find beneficiaries.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the progress of the Secretary in carrying out this section.

(d) UNDISBURSED LIFE INSURANCE BENEFITS DEFINED.—The term “undisbursed life insurance benefits”—

(1) means any amount of money that is owed to a beneficiary of a life insurance policy issued under chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code, and that has not been disbursed for a period of two years or longer; and

(2) does not include any amount of money that—

(A) has not been disbursed due to a contested claim;

or

(B) is in dispute by two or more parties over who is the entitled beneficiary.

SEC. 5. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the

Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

Approved December 27, 2022.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 8260:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 117–463 (Comm. on Veterans' Affairs).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 168 (2022):

Sept. 13, considered in House.

Sept. 14, prior proceedings vacated; considered and passed House.

Dec. 19, considered and passed Senate.