

1989—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 101-189 substituted “Secretary of Veterans Affairs” for “Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs”.

1962—Pub. L. 87-651 amended section generally without substantive change to conform to the style adopted for the revision of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Jan. 1, 1959, see section 2 of Pub. L. 85-857, set out as a note preceding Part I of Title 38, Veterans’ Benefits.

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

For transfer of functions of Public Health Service, see note set out under section 802 of this title.

§ 1554a. Review of separation with disability rating of 20 percent disabled or less

(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) The Secretary of Defense shall establish within the Office of the Secretary of Defense a board of review to review the disability determinations of covered individuals by Physical Evaluation Boards. The board shall be known as the “Physical Disability Board of Review”.

(2) The Physical Disability Board of Review shall consist of not less than three members appointed by the Secretary.

(b) COVERED INDIVIDUALS.—For purposes of this section, covered individuals are members and former members of the armed forces who, during the period beginning on September 11, 2001, and ending on December 31, 2009—

(1) are separated from the armed forces due to unfitness for duty due to a medical condition with a disability rating of 20 percent disabled or less; and

(2) are found to be not eligible for retirement.

(c) REVIEW.—(1) Upon the request of a covered individual, or a surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal representative of a covered individual, the Physical Disability Board of Review shall review the findings and decisions of the Physical Evaluation Board with respect to such covered individual. Subject to paragraph (3), upon its own motion, the Physical Disability Board of Review may review the findings and decisions of the Physical Evaluation Board with respect to a covered individual.

(2) The review by the Physical Disability Board of Review under paragraph (1) shall be based on the records of the armed force concerned and such other evidence as may be presented to the Physical Disability Board of Review. A witness may present evidence to the Board by affidavit or by any other means considered acceptable by the Secretary of Defense.

(3) If the Physical Disability Board of Review proposes to review, upon its own motion, the findings and decisions of the Physical Evaluation Board with respect to a covered individual, the Physical Disability Board of Review shall notify the covered individual, or a surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal representative of the covered individual, of the proposed review and obtain the consent of the covered individual or a surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal representative of the covered individual before proceeding with the review.

(4) With respect to any review by the Physical Disability Board of Review of the findings and

decisions of the Physical Evaluation Board with respect to a covered individual, whether initiated at the request of the covered individual or a surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal representative of the covered individual or initiated by the Physical Disability Board of Review, the Physical Disability Board of Review shall notify the covered individual or a surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal representative of the covered individual that, as a result of the request or consent, the covered individual or a surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal representative of the covered individual may not seek relief from the Board for Correction of Military Records operated by the Secretary concerned.

(d) AUTHORIZED RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Physical Disability Board of Review may, as a result of its findings under a review under subsection (c), recommend to the Secretary concerned the following (as applicable) with respect to a covered individual:

(1) No recharacterization of the separation of such individual or modification of the disability rating previously assigned such individual.

(2) The recharacterization of the separation of such individual to retirement for disability.

(3) The modification of the disability rating previously assigned such individual by the Physical Evaluation Board concerned, which modified disability rating may not be a reduction of the disability rating previously assigned such individual by that Physical Evaluation Board.

(4) The issuance of a new disability rating for such individual.

(e) CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS.—(1) The Secretary concerned may correct the military records of a covered individual in accordance with a recommendation made by the Physical Disability Board of Review under subsection (d). Any such correction may be made effective as of the effective date of the action taken on the report of the Physical Evaluation Board to which such recommendation relates.

(2) In the case of a member previously separated pursuant to the findings and decision of a Physical Evaluation Board together with a lump-sum or other payment of back pay and allowances at separation, the amount of pay or other monetary benefits to which such member would be entitled based on the member’s military record as corrected shall be reduced to take into account receipt of such lump-sum or other payment in such manner as the Secretary of Defense considers appropriate.

(3) If the Physical Disability Board of Review makes a recommendation not to correct the military records of a covered individual, the action taken on the report of the Physical Evaluation Board to which such recommendation relates shall be treated as final as of the date of such action.

(f) Regulations.—(1) This section shall be carried out in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Defense.

(2) The regulations under paragraph (1) shall specify reasonable deadlines for the performance of reviews required by this section.

(3) The regulations under paragraph (1) shall specify the effect of a determination or pending

determination of a Physical Evaluation Board on considerations by boards for correction of military records under section 1552 of this title.

(g) SUNSET.—(1) On or after the date of the enactment of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, the Secretary of Defense may sunset the Physical Disability Board of Review under this section.

(2) If the Secretary sunsets the Physical Disability Board of Review under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall transfer any remaining requests for review pending at that time, and shall assign any new requests for review under this section, to a board for the correction of military records operated by the Secretary concerned under section 1552 of this title.¹

(3) Subsection (c)(4) shall not apply with respect to any review conducted by a board for the correction of military records under paragraph (2).

(Added Pub. L. 110–181, div. A, title XVI, §1643(a)(1), Jan. 28, 2008, 122 Stat. 465; amended Pub. L. 116–283, div. A, title V, §522, Jan. 1, 2021, 134 Stat. 3597.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The date of the enactment of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, referred to in subsec. (g)(1), is the date of enactment of Pub. L. 116–283, which was approved Jan. 1, 2021.

AMENDMENTS

2021—Subsec. (g). Pub. L. 116–283 added subsec. (g).

IMPLEMENTATION

Pub. L. 110–181, div. A, title XVI, §1643(b), Jan. 28, 2008, 122 Stat. 467, provided that: “The Secretary of Defense shall establish the board of review required by section 1554a of title 10, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)), and prescribe the regulations required by such section, not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act [Jan. 28, 2008].”

§ 1554b. Confidential review of characterization of terms of discharge of members of the armed forces who are victims of sex-related offenses

(a) CONFIDENTIAL REVIEW PROCESS THROUGH BOARDS FOR CORRECTION OF MILITARY RECORDS.—The Secretaries of the military departments shall each establish a confidential process, utilizing boards of the military department concerned established in accordance with this chapter, by which an individual who was the victim of a sex-related offense, or alleges that the individual was the victim of a sex-related offense, during service in the armed forces may challenge the terms or characterization of the discharge or separation of the individual from the armed forces on the grounds that the terms or characterization were adversely affected by the individual being the victim of a sex-related offense.

(b) CONSIDERATION OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES IN CONNECTION WITH OFFENSES.—In deciding whether to modify the terms or characterization of the discharge or separation from the armed forces of an individual described in subsection

(a), the Secretary of the military department concerned shall instruct boards of the military department concerned established in accordance with this chapter—

(1) to give due consideration to the psychological and physical aspects of the individual’s experience in connection with the sex-related offense; and

(2) to determine what bearing such experience may have had on the circumstances surrounding the individual’s discharge or separation from the armed forces.

(c) PRESERVATION OF CONFIDENTIALITY.—Documents considered and decisions rendered pursuant to the process required by subsection (a) shall not be made available to the public, except with the consent of the individual concerned.

(d) SEX-RELATED OFFENSE DEFINED.—In this section, the term “sex-related offense” means any of the following:

(1) Rape or sexual assault under subsection (a) or (b) of section 920 of this title (article 120 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(2) Forcible sodomy under section 925 of this title (article 125 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(3) An attempt to commit an offense specified in paragraph (1) or (2) as punishable under section 880 of this title (article 80 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(Added and amended Pub. L. 115–91, div. A, title V, §522(a)(1), (b), (c), Dec. 12, 2017, 131 Stat. 1380, 1381.)

CODIFICATION

Text of section, as added by Pub. L. 115–91, is based on text of Pub. L. 113–291, div. A, title V, §547, Dec. 19, 2014, 128 Stat. 3375, which was formerly set out in a note under section 1553 of this title before being transferred to this chapter and designated as the text of this section.

AMENDMENTS

2017—Pub. L. 115–91, §522(a)(1), inserted section enumerator and catchline and transferred text of section 547 of Pub. L. 113–291 to this section. See Codification note above.

Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 115–91, §522(c)(2), substituted “boards of the military department concerned established in accordance with this chapter” for “boards for the correction of military records of the military department concerned” and “being the victim of a sex-related offense” for “being the victim of such an offense”.

Pub. L. 115–91, §522(c)(1), substituted “armed forces” for “Armed Forces” in two places.

Pub. L. 115–91, §522(b), substituted “who was the victim of a sex-related offense, or alleges that the individual was the victim of a sex-related offense,” for “who was the victim of a sex-related offense”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 115–91, §522(c)(3), substituted “boards of the military department concerned established in accordance with this chapter” for “boards for the correction of military records” in introductory provisions.

Pub. L. 115–91, §522(c)(1), substituted “armed forces” for “Armed Forces” in two places.

Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 115–91, §522(c)(4)(B), substituted “this title” for “title 10, United States Code”.

Subsec. (d)(2), (3). Pub. L. 115–91, §522(c)(4)(C), substituted “this title” for “such title”.

§ 1555. Professional staff

(a) The Secretary of each military department shall assign to the staff of the service review

¹ So in original. The second period probably should not appear.