

(ii) whether certain administrative capabilities necessary for operating the Office are redundant with those of another VA office, component, or program; and

(iii) whether combining the Office with another VA office, component, or program may improve the VA's efficiency, effectiveness, or accountability.

SEC. 3. *General Provisions.* (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

DONALD J. TRUMP.

§ 302. Seal

(a) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall cause a seal of office to be made for the Department of such device as the President shall approve. Judicial notice shall be taken of the seal.

(b) Copies of any public document, record, or paper belonging to or in the files of the Department, when authenticated by the seal and certified by the Secretary (or by an officer or employee of the Department to whom authority has been delegated in writing by the Secretary), shall be evidence equal with the original thereof.

(Added Pub. L. 102-83, §2(a), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 379.)

Editorial Notes

PRIOR PROVISIONS

Prior section 302 was renumbered section 1102 of this title.

Provisions similar to those in this section were contained in section 202 of this title prior to repeal by Pub. L. 102-83, §2(a).

§ 303. Secretary of Veterans Affairs

There is a Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who is the head of the Department and is appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Secretary is responsible for the proper execution and administration of all laws administered by the Department and for the control, direction, and management of the Department.

(Added Pub. L. 102-83, §2(a), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 379.)

Editorial Notes

PRIOR PROVISIONS

Provisions similar to those in this section were contained in section 210(a), (b)(1) of this title and in second and third sentences of section 2 of Pub. L. 100-527, known as the Department of Veterans Affairs Act, prior to repeal by Pub. L. 102-83, §§2(a), 3(1).

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

PLAN FOR REDUCTION OF BACKLOG OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

Pub. L. 117-328, div. U, title IV, §406, Dec. 29, 2022, 136 Stat. 5493, provided that:

“(a) PLAN.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish and carry out a plan for the Secretary to meet, by not later than five years after the date of the enactment of this Act [Dec. 29, 2022], the requirements of section 552 of title 5, United States Code, (commonly known as the ‘Freedom of Information Act’ or ‘FOIA’) with respect to providing documents and information under such section within the timeframes required by such section.

“(2) ELEMENTS.—The plan required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

“(A) Improving and acquiring technology, including with respect to searching email and other electronic information, and the timelines for such improvement, to ensure that the information technology of the Department of Veterans Affairs is capable of carrying out the plan.

“(B) Identification of efficient procedures, policies, and systems of the Department that could be developed to allow employees of the Department responsible for replying to requests under such section 552 to search and review documents rather than other employees of the Department.

“(C) A schedule for carrying out the plan, including key milestones and metrics.

“(b) COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT.—The Secretary shall request the Director of the Office of Government Information Services of the National Archives and Records Administration to conduct an assessment of the compliance by the Department of Veterans Affairs with section 552 of title 5, United States Code.

“(c) REPORTS.—

“(1) INITIAL REPORT.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on implementing subsections (a) and (b).

“(B) CONTENTS.—The report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

“(i) The plan established under subsection (a).

“(ii) An analysis of the root causes of the backlog of Freedom of Information Act requests.

“(iii) Recommendations with respect to any additional resources or legislative action the Secretary determines necessary for such implementation.

“(2) ANNUAL REPORTS.—During the five-year period following the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives annual reports on—

“(A) carrying out the plan under subsection (a), including any updates or changes made to the plan; and

“(B) the compliance by the Department as described in subsection (b).

“(3) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall make publicly available on the internet website of the Department the reports under paragraphs (1) and (2) by not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary submits the reports to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

“(d) DEFINITION OF BACKLOG OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS.—In this section, the term ‘backlog of Freedom of Information Act requests’ means the number of requests, as reported by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Attorney General in the Annual FOIA Report, made by individuals to the Secretary pursuant to section 552 of title 5, United States Code, for documents or information that the Secretary has not fulfilled or provided a response to the individual.”

WAIVER OF PAY CAPS FOR EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DURING PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Pub. L. 116-136, div. B, title X, §20008, Mar. 27, 2020, 134 Stat. 588, provided that:

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may waive any limitation on pay for an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs during a public health emergency for work done in support of response to the emergency.

“(b) REPORTING.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—For each month that the Secretary waives a limitation under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the waiver.

“(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) for a waiver or waivers in a month shall include the following:

“(A) Where the waiver or waivers were used, including in which component of the Department and, as the case may be, which medical center of the Department.

“(B) For how many employees the waiver or waivers were used, disaggregated by component of the Department and, if applicable, medical center of the Department.

“(C) The average amount by which each payment exceeded the waived pay limitation that was waived, disaggregated by component of the Department and, if applicable, medical center of the Department.

“(c) EMPLOYEE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DEFINED.—In this section, the term ‘employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ includes any employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs, regardless of the authority under which the employee was hired.”

[For definition of “public health emergency” as used in section 20008 of Pub. L. 116–136, set out above, see section 20003 of Pub. L. 116–136, set out below.]

PROVISION BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR HOME HEALTH WORKERS

Pub. L. 116–136, div. B, title X, §20009, Mar. 27, 2020, 134 Stat. 588, provided that:

“(a) PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—During a public health emergency, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide to employees and contractors of the Department of Veterans Affairs personal protective equipment necessary to provide home care to veterans under the laws administered by the Secretary.

“(2) SOURCE OF EQUIPMENT.—Personal protective equipment may be provided under paragraph (1) through the All Hazards Emergency Cache of the Department or any other source available to the Department.

“(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) HOME CARE.—The term ‘home care’ has the meaning given that term in section 1803(c) of title 38, United States Code.

“(2) PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT.—The term ‘personal protective equipment’ means any protective equipment required to prevent the wearer from contracting COVID–19, including gloves, N–95 respirator masks, gowns, goggles, face shields, or other equipment required for safety.”

[For definition of “public health emergency” as used in section 20009 of Pub. L. 116–136, set out above, see section 20003 of Pub. L. 116–136, set out below.]

SECRETARY'S APPROVAL OF RESEARCH USING CANINES, FELINES, OR NON-HUMAN PRIMATES

Pub. L. 117–328, div. J, title II, §247, Dec. 29, 2022, 136 Stat. 4967, provided that:

“(a) None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act [div. J of Pub. L. 117–328, see Tables for classification] may be used to conduct research commencing on or after October 1, 2019, that uses any canine, feline, or non-human primate unless

the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approves such research specifically and in writing pursuant to subsection (b).

“(b)(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may approve the conduct of research commencing on or after October 1, 2019, using canines, felines, or non-human primates if the Secretary determines that—

“(A) the scientific objectives of the research can only be met by using such canines, felines, or non-human primates;

“(B) such scientific objectives are directly related to an illness or injury that is combat-related; and

“(C) the research is consistent with the revised Department of Veterans Affairs canine research policy document dated December 15, 2017, including any subsequent revisions to such document.

“(2) The Secretary may not delegate the authority under this subsection.

“(c) If the Secretary approves any new research pursuant to subsection (b), not later than 30 days before the commencement of such research, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and House of Representatives a report describing—

“(1) the nature of the research to be conducted using canines, felines, or non-human primates;

“(2) the date on which the Secretary approved the research;

“(3) the justification for the determination of the Secretary that the scientific objectives of such research could only be met using canines, felines, or non-human primates;

“(4) the frequency and duration of such research; and

“(5) the protocols in place to ensure the necessity, safety, and efficacy of the research.

“(d) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act [Dec. 29, 2022], and biannually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to such Committees a report describing—

“(1) any research being conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs using canines, felines, or non-human primates as of the date of the submittal of the report;

“(2) the circumstances under which such research was conducted using canines, felines, or non-human primates;

“(3) the justification for using canines, felines, or non-human primates to conduct such research; and

“(4) the protocols in place to ensure the necessity, safety, and efficacy of such research.

“(e) The Department shall implement a plan under which the Secretary will eliminate or reduce the research conducted using canines, felines, or non-human primates by not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of Public Law 116–94 [Dec. 20, 2019].”

Similar provisions were contained in the following prior appropriation acts:

Pub. L. 117–103, div. J, title II, §247, Mar. 15, 2022, 136 Stat. 558.

Pub. L. 116–260, div. J, title II, §247, Dec. 27, 2020, 134 Stat. 1682.

Pub. L. 116–94, div. F, title II, §249, Dec. 20, 2019, 133 Stat. 2806.

PLANS FOR USE OF SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS REQUIRED

Pub. L. 115–182, title I, §141, June 6, 2018, 132 Stat. 1429, as amended by Pub. L. 115–251, title II, §211(b)(3), Sept. 29, 2018, 132 Stat. 3176, provided that: “Whenever the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submits to Congress a request for supplemental appropriations or any other appropriation outside the standard budget process to address a budgetary issue affecting the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary shall, not later than 45 days before the date on which such budgetary issue would start affecting a program or service, submit to Congress a justification for the request, including a plan that details how the Secretary intends to use the requested appropriation and how long the requested ap-

propriation is expected to meet the needs of the Department and certification that the request was made using an updated and sound actuarial analysis.”

INCLUSION IN ANNUAL BUDGET SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION ON CAPACITY OF VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION TO PROCESS BENEFITS CLAIMS

Pub. L. 114-315, title I, §106, Dec. 16, 2016, 130 Stat. 1542, provided that:

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Along with the supporting information included in the budget submitted to Congress by the President pursuant to section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, the President shall include information on the capacity of the Veterans Benefits Administration to process claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, including information described in subsection (b), during the fiscal year covered by the budget with which the information is submitted.

“(b) **INFORMATION DESCRIBED.**—The information described in this subsection is the following:

“(1) An estimate of the average number of claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary, excluding such claims completed during mandatory overtime, that a single full-time equivalent employee of the Administration should be able to process in a year, based on the following:

“(A) A time and motion study that the Secretary shall conduct on the processing of such claims.

“(B) Such other information relating to such claims as the Secretary considers appropriate.

“(2) A description of the actions the Secretary will take to improve the processing of such claims.

“(3) An assessment of the actions identified by the Secretary under paragraph (2) in the previous year and an identification of the effects of those actions.

“(c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—This section shall apply with respect to any budget submitted as described in subsection (a) with respect to any fiscal year after fiscal year 2018.”

INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN BUDGET JUSTIFICATION DOCUMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTION, MAJOR PROJECTS ACCOUNT

Pub. L. 114-223, div. A, title II, §258, Sept. 29, 2016, 130 Stat. 895, provided that:

“(a) In fiscal year 2017 and each fiscal year hereafter, beginning with the fiscal year 2018 budget request submitted to Congress pursuant to section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, the budget justification documents submitted for the ‘Construction, Major Projects’ account of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall include, at a minimum, the information required under subsection (b).

“(b) The budget justification documents submitted pursuant to subsection (a) shall include, for each project—

“(1) the estimated total cost of the project;

“(2) the funding provided for each fiscal year prior to the budget year;

“(3) the amount requested for the budget year;

“(4) the estimated funding required for the project for each of the 4 fiscal years succeeding the budget year; and

“(5) such additional information as is enumerated under the heading relating to the ‘Construction, Major Projects’ account of the Department of Veterans Affairs in the joint explanatory statement accompanying this Act.

“(c) Not later than 45 days after the date of enactment of this Act [Sept. 29, 2016], the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a proposed budget justification template that complies with the requirements of this section.”

[For definition of “joint explanatory statement accompanying this Act” as used in section 258 of div. A of Pub. L. 114-223, set out above, see section 6 of Pub. L. 114-223, Sept. 29, 2016, 130 Stat. 858.]

NOTICE TO CONGRESSIONAL VETERANS COMMITTEES OF CERTAIN TRANSFERS OF FUNDS

Pub. L. 109-461, title X, §1001, Dec. 22, 2006, 120 Stat. 3464, provided that: “To the extent that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is required or directed, under any provision of law, to provide written notice to any committee of Congress other than the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives on the transfer of appropriations from one account to any other account, the Secretary shall also transmit such notice to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives.”

NATIONAL CENTER ON WAR-RELATED ILLNESSES AND POST-DEPLOYMENT HEALTH ISSUES

Pub. L. 105-368, title I, §103, Nov. 11, 1998, 112 Stat. 3322, provided that:

“(a) **ASSESSMENT.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall seek to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences, or another appropriate independent organization, under which such entity shall assist in developing a plan for the establishment of a national center or national centers for the study of war-related illnesses and post-deployment health issues. The purposes of such a center may include—

“(1) carrying out and promoting research regarding the etiologies, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of war-related illnesses and post-deployment health issues; and

“(2) promoting the development of appropriate health policies, including monitoring, medical recordkeeping, risk communication, and use of new technologies.

“(b) **RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORT.**—With respect to such a center, an agreement under this section shall provide for the Academy (or other entity) to—

“(1) make recommendations regarding: (A) design of an organizational structure or structures, operational scope, staffing and resource needs, establishment of appropriate databases, the advantages of single or multiple sites, mechanisms for implementing recommendations on policy, and relationship to academic or scientific entities; (B) the role or roles that relevant Federal departments and agencies should have in the establishment and operation of any such center or centers; and (C) such other matters as it considers appropriate; and

“(2) report to the Secretary, the Secretaries of Defense and Health and Human Services, and the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives, not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act [Nov. 11, 1998], on its recommendations.

“(c) **REPORT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL CENTER.**—Not later than 60 days after receiving the report under subsection (b), the Secretaries specified in subsection (b)(2) shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs and Armed Services of the Senate and the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs and National [sic] Security of the House of Representatives a joint report on the findings and recommendations contained in that report. Such report may set forth an operational plan for carrying out any recommendation in that report to establish a national center or centers for the study of war-related illnesses. No action to carry out such plan may be taken after the submission of such report until the end of a 90-day period following the date of the submission.”

SPECIFICATION IN BUDGET SUBMISSIONS OF FUNDS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS BENEFITS

Pub. L. 100-687, div. B, title XIV, §1404, Nov. 18, 1988, 102 Stat. 4131, as amended by Pub. L. 102-83, §§5(c)(2), 6(k)(3), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 406, 409, provided that:

“(a) **BUDGET INFORMATION.**—In the documentation providing detailed information on the budgets for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of

Labor that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Labor, respectively, submit to the Congress in conjunction with the President's budget submission for each fiscal year pursuant to section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Labor shall identify, to the maximum extent feasible, the estimated amount in each of the appropriation requests for Department of Veterans Affairs accounts and Department of Labor accounts, respectively, that is to be obligated for the furnishing of each of the following services or benefits only to, or with respect to, veterans who performed active military, naval, or air service in combat with the enemy or in a theatre of combat operations during a period of war or other hostilities:

- “(1) Employment services and other employment benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Labor.
- “(2) Compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.
- “(3) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation under chapter 13 of such title.
- “(4) Pension under chapter 15 of such title.
- “(5) Inpatient hospital care under chapter 17 of such title.
- “(6) Outpatient medical care under chapter 17 of such title.
- “(7) Nursing home care under chapter 17 of such title.
- “(8) Domiciliary care under chapter 17 of such title.
- “(9) Readjustment counseling services under section 1712A of such title.
- “(10) Insurance under chapter 19 of such title.
- “(11) Specially adapted housing for disabled veterans under chapter 21 of such title.
- “(12) Burial benefits under chapter 23 of such title.
- “(13) Educational assistance under chapters 30, 32, and 34 of such title and chapter 106 of title 10, United States Code.
- “(14) Vocational rehabilitation services under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code.
- “(15) Survivors' and dependents' educational assistance under chapter 35 of such title.
- “(16) Home loan benefits under chapter 37 of such title.
- “(17) Automobiles and adaptive equipment under chapter 39 of such title.

“(b) **REPORT ON FEASIBILITY.**—If the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Secretary of Labor determines that, with respect to any services or benefits referred to in subsection (a), it is not feasible to identify an estimated dollar amount to be obligated for furnishing such services or benefits only to veterans described in that subsection for any fiscal year, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Labor shall, with respect to an appropriation request for such fiscal year relating to such services or benefits, report to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives the reasons for the infeasibility. The report shall be submitted contemporaneously with the budget submission for such fiscal year. The report shall specify (1) the information, systems, equipment, or personnel that would be required in order for it to be feasible for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Secretary of Labor to identify such amount, and (2) the actions to be taken in order to ensure that it will be feasible to make such an estimate in connection with the submission of the budget request for the next fiscal year.”

INFORMATION AND TRAINING CONCERNING AIDS PREVENTION

Pub. L. 100-322, title I, §123, May 20, 1988, 102 Stat. 504, as amended by Pub. L. 102-83, §6(j)(2), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 409; Pub. L. 102-531, title III, §312(c), Oct. 27, 1992, 106 Stat. 3504, provided that:

“(a) **INFORMATION PROGRAM.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish and carry out an information program relating to the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (hereinafter in this section referred to

as ‘AIDS’). The information program shall be for employees and consultants of the Department of Veterans Affairs, for other persons providing services in Department of Veterans Affairs facilities to beneficiaries of programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for such beneficiaries.

“(b) **REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF INFORMATION PROGRAM.**—In conducting the program under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

- “(1) develop, in consultation with the Surgeon General of the United States and the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, publications and other materials containing information on AIDS, including information on the prevention of infection with the human immunodeficiency virus;
- “(2) provide for periodic dissemination of publications (including the Surgeon General's Report on AIDS) and other materials containing such information;
- “(3) make publications and other suitable materials containing such information readily available in Department of Veterans Affairs health-care facilities and such other Department of Veterans Affairs facilities as the Secretary considers appropriate; and
- “(4) disseminate information (including the Surgeon General's Report on AIDS) on the risk of transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus, and information on preventing the transmission of such virus, to Department of Veterans Affairs substance abuse treatment personnel, to each person being furnished treatment by the Department of Veterans Affairs for drug abuse, and to each person receiving care or services from the Department of Veterans Affairs whom the Secretary believes to be at high risk for AIDS.

“(c) **TRAINING IN AIDS PREVENTION.**—The Secretary shall establish and carry out a program that provides for education, training, and other activities (including continuing education and infection control programs) regarding AIDS and the human immunodeficiency virus designed to improve the effectiveness and safety of all health-care personnel and all health-care support personnel involved in the furnishing of care under programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.”

DEFINITION OF ‘PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY’

Pub. L. 116-136, div. B, title X, §20003, Mar. 27, 2020, 134 Stat. 585, provided that: “In this title [enacting provisions set out as notes above and under sections 1503, 1710B, 1712A, 1714, 1741, 2011, 2041, and 2044 of this title], the term ‘public health emergency’ means an emergency with respect to COVID-19 declared by a Federal, State, or local authority.”

Executive Documents

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FUNCTIONS

For assignment of certain emergency preparedness functions to Secretary of Veterans Affairs, see Parts 1, 2, and 27 of Ex. Ord. No. 12656, Nov. 18, 1988, 53 F.R. 47491, set out as a note under section 5195 of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare.

§ 304. Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs

There is in the Department a Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, who is appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Deputy Secretary shall perform such functions as the Secretary shall prescribe. Unless the President designates another officer of the Government, the Deputy Secretary shall be Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs during the absence or disability of the Secretary or in the event of a vacancy in the office of Secretary.

(Added Pub. L. 102-83, §2(a), Aug. 6, 1991, 105 Stat. 379.)