

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2970

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to the laws relating to advocacy for veterans who receive health care and other benefits furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 17, 2025

Mr. YAKYM introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to the laws relating to advocacy for veterans who receive health care and other benefits furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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 “National Veterans Ad-
5 vocate Act of 2025”.

1 **SEC. 2. INDEPENDENT OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL VET-**
2 **ERANS' ADVOCATE IN DEPARTMENT OF VET-**
3 **ERANS AFFAIRS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7309A of title 38, United
5 States Code, is amended—

6 (1) by striking the section heading and insert-
7 ing the following new section heading:

8 **“§ 7309A. Office of the National Veterans' Advocate”;**

9 (2) in subsection (a)—

10 (A) by striking “within the Office of the
11 Under Secretary for Health”;

12 (B) by striking “an office” and inserting
13 “an independent office”; and

14 (C) by striking “‘Office of Patient Advo-
15 cacy’” and inserting “‘Office of the National
16 Veterans' Advocate’”;

17 (3) by striking “patient advocate” each place it
18 appears and inserting “veteran advocate”;

19 (4) in subsection (b)—

20 (A) by striking paragraph (1) and insert-
21 ing the following new paragraph (1):

22 “(1) The Office of the National Veterans' Advocate
23 shall be under the supervision and direction of an official
24 to be known as the “National Veterans' Advocate”. The
25 National Veterans' Advocate shall report directly to the
26 Secretary and shall be entitled to compensation at the

1 same rate as the highest rate of basic pay established for
2 the Senior Executive Service under section 5382 of title
3 5, United States Code.”; and

4 (B) in paragraph (2)—

5 (i) by striking “Office of Patient Ad-
6 vocacy” and inserting “Office of the Na-
7 tional Veterans’ Advocate”;

8 (ii) by striking “by the Under Sec-
9 retary for Health” and inserting “by the
10 Secretary”; and

11 (iii) by striking “shall report directly
12 to the Under Secretary for Health” and in-
13 serting “shall be independent of the Sec-
14 retary”;

15 (5) by striking “Director” each place it appears
16 and inserting “National Veterans’ Advocate”;

17 (6) in subsection (c)—

18 (A) by striking the subsection heading and
19 inserting “(c) FUNCTIONS.—”;

20 (B) in paragraph (1)—

21 (i) by striking “function” and insert-
22 ing “functions”;

23 (ii) by striking “is” and inserting
24 “are”; and

1 (iii) by inserting before the period at
2 the end the following: “and to monitor De-
3 partment processes and make rec-
4 ommendations to Congress on how to im-
5 prove the Department’s efficiency and care
6 for veterans”;

7 (C) in paragraph (2)—

8 (i) in subparagraph (B), by striking
9 “and” after the semicolon;

10 (ii) in subparagraph (C), by striking
11 the period and inserting a semicolon; and

12 (iii) by adding at the end the fol-
13 lowing new subparagraphs:

14 “(D) identify areas in which veterans have
15 problems in dealings with the Department;

16 “(E) to the extent possible, propose changes in
17 the administrative practices of the Department to
18 mitigate problems identified under subparagraph
19 (D); and

20 “(F) identify potential legislative changes which
21 may be appropriate to mitigate such problems.”;

22 (D) in paragraph (3)—

23 (i) in subparagraph (A), by striking
24 “and” after the semicolon;

1 (ii) by redesignating subparagraph
2 (B) as subparagraph (C);

3 (iii) by inserting after subparagraph
4 (A) the following new subparagraph (B):

5 “(B) fill out forms to relating to casework prob-
6 lem that facilitate the rapid assignment of a local
7 veteran advocate caseworker who can directly inter-
8 face with the veteran if needed; and”;

9 (iv) in subparagraph (C), as redesign-
10 nated by clause (ii), by inserting “or
11 forms” after “complaint” both times it ap-
12 pears;

13 (E) by adding at the end the following new
14 paragraphs:

15 “(4) The Office shall have the authority to manage
16 casework issues across the Department.

17 “(5)(A) Not later than March 30 and September 30
18 of each year, the National Veterans’ Advocate shall submit
19 to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and
20 House of Representatives a report on the operations of
21 the Office of the National Veterans’ Advocate. Each such
22 report shall include—

23 “(i) a description of the activities of the Office
24 carried out pursuant so subsection (c)(2)(D)
25 through (F); and

1 “(ii) independent legislative recommendations
2 for the improvement of health outcomes for veterans,
3 the quality of health care and benefits provided by
4 the Department, and the cost efficiency of the De-
5 partment.

6 “(B) Recommendations included in a report under
7 this paragraph may not be reviewed by the Secretary or
8 by any other official of the Department prior to submis-
9 sion.

10 “(C) Each report under this paragraph shall be
11 transmitted to the Secretary and made publicly available
12 on the website the National Veterans’ Advocate.

13 “(6) The Office shall have a designated publicly ac-
14 cessible website that includes access to the information
15 technology system required under paragraph (3).”;

16 (7) in subsection (d)—

17 (A) in the subsection heading, by striking
18 “PATIENT ADVOCACY” and inserting “VET-
19 ERAN ADVOCACY”; and

20 (B) by adding at the end the following new
21 paragraph:

22 “(15) In coordination with the recommendation
23 team, to identify problems experienced within the
24 Department in the course of providing hospital care,
25 medical services, and nursing home care and burial

1 and interment benefits to veterans and to develop
2 recommendations to address such problems.”;

3 (8) in subsection (e)—

4 (A) by striking “shall ensure that such
5 training is consistent throughout the Depart-
6 ment.” and inserting “shall—”;

7 (B) by adding at the end the following new
8 subparagraphs:

9 “(A) develop the curriculum for such train-
10 ing in coordination with the Under Secretary
11 for Benefits, the Under Secretary for Health,
12 the Director of each of the Veterans Integrated
13 Service Networks, and veterans service organi-
14 zations;

15 “(B) ensure that each veteran advocate is
16 required to receive such training on an annual
17 basis;

18 “(C) ensure that such training includes up-
19 to-date information on Department policy, crisis
20 management, health care, and such other mat-
21 ters as the Secretary determines appropriate;
22 and

23 “(D) ensure that such training is con-
24 sistent throughout the Department.”;

1 (9) by redesignating subsection (f) as sub-
2 section (l); and

3 (10) by inserting after subsection (e) the fol-
4 lowing new subsections:

5 “(f) DEPUTY NATIONAL VETERANS’ ADVOCATES.—

6 (1) There is in each Veterans Integrated Service Network
7 (hereinafter referred to as a ‘VISN’) a Deputy National
8 Veterans’ Advocate who shall have responsibility for man-
9 aging the employees of the Office with primary responsi-
10 bility for casework.

11 “(2) The Deputy National Veterans’ Advocate for a
12 VISN shall ensure that for the geographic area served by
13 that VISN, the Department employs at least one veteran
14 advocate for every 12,000 veterans who reside in such area
15 and are enrolled in the patient enrollment system under
16 section 1705 of this title.

17 “(g) OFFICE EMPLOYEES.—The Office of the Na-
18 tional Veterans’ Advocate shall have employees in the
19 Washington, D.C., office in the Department. Such employ-
20 ees shall carry out the responsibilities under subsection
21 (c)(2)(D) through (F), coordinate with Deputy National
22 Veterans’ Advocates and veteran advocates, and carry out
23 such other responsibilities as the National Veterans’ Advo-
24 cate determines appropriate.

1 “(h) CASEWORK REQUEST PORTAL.—The National
2 Veterans’ Advocate shall establish, on the website of the
3 National Veterans’ Advocate, a casework request portal
4 that veterans can use to request assistance with casework.

5 “(i) OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall conduct out-
6 reach to veterans receiving benefits under the laws admin-
7 istrated by the Secretary to provide information to such
8 veterans about the Office and the assistance available to
9 veterans through the Office.

10 “(j) COORDINATION TO IMPROVE POLICIES.—The
11 Secretary, the National Veterans’ Advocate, the Under
12 Secretary for Health, and the Under Secretary for Bene-
13 fits shall—

14 “(1) work closely together on a continual basis
15 to improve the policies of the Department without
16 the necessity for congressional action; and

17 “(2) communicate frequently to ensure such im-
18 provement.

19 “(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
20 is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
21 \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030.”.

22 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
23 at the beginning of chapter 73 of such title is amended

- 1 by striking the item relating to section 7309A and insert-
- 2 ing the following new item:

“7309A. Office of the National Veterans’ Advocate.”.

