

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 7342

To establish the Veterans Advisory Committee on Equal Access, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 13, 2024

Mr. VALADAO (for himself and Mr. MCGARVEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To establish the Veterans Advisory Committee on Equal Access, 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 “Veterans Accessibility
5 Advisory Committee Act of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUAL AC-**
7 **CESS.**

8 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days
10 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-

1 retary of Veterans Affairs shall establish within the
2 Department of Veterans Affairs an advisory com-
3 mittee on matters relating to accessibility of the De-
4 partment for individuals with disabilities.

5 (2) DESIGNATION.—The advisory committee es-
6 tablished by paragraph (1) shall be known as the
7 “Veterans Advisory Committee on Equal Access” (in
8 this section the “Advisory Committee”).

9 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—

10 (1) VOTING MEMBERS.—The Advisory Com-
11 mittee shall be composed of 15 voting members, ap-
12 pointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. In ap-
13 pointing such members, the Secretary shall ensure
14 the following:

15 (A) Four are veterans with disabilities, in-
16 cluding mobility impairment, hearing, visual,
17 and mental or cognitive disabilities.

18 (B) Four are experts on issues described in
19 subsection (f)(1)(A) or the provisions of law set
20 forth under subsection (f)(1)(B).

21 (C) Two are employees of the Department,
22 one from the Section 508 Office and one from
23 the Architectural Accessibility Program, who
24 oversee the compliance of the Department with
25 Federal accessibility laws.

1 (D) Five are representatives nominated by
2 national veterans service organizations that ad-
3 vocate for veterans with physical, sensory, men-
4 tal, or cognitive disabilities.

5 (2) EX OFFICIO MEMBERS.—The Advisory
6 Committee shall also include four ex officio members
7 (or their designees):

8 (A) The Under Secretary for Health.

9 (B) The Under Secretary for Benefits.

10 (C) The Under Secretary for Memorial Af-
11 fairs.

12 (D) The chairperson of the Architectural
13 and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board
14 (known as the “Access Board”).

15 (c) TERMS; VACANCIES.—

16 (1) TERMS.—A member of the Advisory Com-
17 mittee shall be appointed for a term of two years.
18 The Secretary may reappoint members to the Advi-
19 sory Committee for such additional two-year terms
20 as the Secretary determines appropriate.

21 (2) VACANCIES.—The Secretary shall fill a va-
22 cancy in the Advisory Committee in the same man-
23 ner as the original appointment not later than 180
24 days after such vacancy occurs.

25 (d) MEETINGS.—

1 (1) FREQUENCY.—The Advisory Committee
2 shall meet not less frequently than twice each year.

3 (2) SUBCOMMITTEES.—The Advisory Com-
4 mittee may form subcommittees, which shall meet as
5 often as required.

6 (3) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of
7 the Advisory Committee shall constitute a quorum.

8 (e) CHAIRPERSON.—Members of the Advisory Com-
9 mittee shall select a Chairperson from among the members
10 of the Advisory Committee. If the position of Chairperson
11 becomes vacant, the members of the Advisory Committee
12 shall select a new Chairperson not later than 30 days after
13 the date on which the position became vacant.

14 (f) DUTIES.—

15 (1) REQUIREMENT TO CONSULT AND SEEK AD-
16 VICE.—On a regular basis, the Secretary shall con-
17 sult with and seek the advice of the Advisory Com-
18 mittee—

19 (A) on improving the accessibility of the
20 Department for individuals with disabilities, in-
21 cluding improving—

22 (i) the accessibility of information of
23 the Department, including electronic infor-
24 mation;

1 (ii) the accessibility of the services
2 and benefits furnished by the Department;

3 (iii) the accessibility of the facilities of
4 the Department;

5 (iv) the accessibility of facilities of
6 health care providers furnishing care or
7 services under the Veterans Community
8 Care Program under section 1703 of title
9 38, United States Code; and

10 (v) the acquisition process of the De-
11 partment to ensure that products and serv-
12 ices, including information technology and
13 information and communication technology
14 (as defined in the standards issued by the
15 Architectural and Transportation Barriers
16 Compliance Board pursuant to section 508
17 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29
18 U.S.C. 794d)), are accessible when pur-
19 chased; and

20 (B) for ensuring the compliance of the De-
21 partment with provisions of law relating to dis-
22 ability and accessibility, including—

23 (i) the Americans with Disabilities Act
24 of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12184 et seq.);

1 (ii) sections 504 and 508 of the Reha-
2 bilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 791,
3 794, and 794d);

4 (iii) the Plain Writing Act of 2010 (5
5 U.S.C. 301 note);

6 (iv) the 21st Century Integrated Dig-
7 ital Experience Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 note);

8 (v) the Architectural Barriers Act of
9 1968 (Public Law 90–480); and

10 (vi) such other provisions of Federal
11 law as may be that ensure equal access to
12 Federal facilities, benefits, or services for
13 individuals with disabilities.

14 (2) PROVISION OF ADVICE.—In providing ad-
15 vice to the Secretary, the Advisory Committee shall,
16 focusing on the areas of greatest need for the De-
17 partment—

18 (A) assess the disability access needs of
19 veterans, the public, and Department employees
20 for full access to the Department’s information,
21 services, and benefits by reviewing relevant in-
22 formation, such as filed complaints by people
23 with disabilities or physical assessments of the
24 Department’s facilities;

1 (B) provide assessments of accessibility at
2 the Department and the compliance of the De-
3 partment with applicable provisions of law re-
4 lating to disability and accessibility; and

5 (C) provide advice on improving accessi-
6 bility at the Department, including the accessi-
7 bility of all—

8 (i) communications, including internal
9 and public facing;

10 (ii) services and benefits; and

11 (iii) facilities.

12 (3) REPORTS.—

13 (A) REPORTS TO THE SECRETARY.—Not
14 later than two years after the date of the first
15 meeting of the Advisory Committee, and not
16 less frequently than once every two years there-
17 after, the Advisory Committee shall submit to
18 the Secretary a report that, focusing on areas
19 of greatest need for the Department—

20 (i) identifies and assesses access bar-
21 riers affecting veterans, the public, and
22 employees of the Department;

23 (ii) determines the extent to which the
24 programs and activities of the Department
25 address the barriers identified in clause (i),

1 including compliance of the Department
2 with provisions of law relating to accessi-
3 bility law and reporting;

4 (iii) provides recommendations and
5 access priorities to improve the accessi-
6 bility of the Department's services, bene-
7 fits, information, technology, and facilities;

8 (iv) provides a description of access
9 improvements and assesses the Depart-
10 ment's implementation of recommendations
11 from previous reports of the Advisory
12 Committee, including any unmet rec-
13 ommendations that remain necessary for
14 improving accessibility for the Department;
15 and

16 (v) provides any recommendations for
17 legislation, administrative action, or other
18 actions that the Advisory Committee deter-
19 mines appropriate.

20 (B) REPORTS TO CONGRESS AND FEDERAL
21 AGENCIES.—

22 (i) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90
23 days after the receipt of a report required
24 under subparagraph (A), the Secretary
25 shall submit to the appropriate congres-

1 sional committees a copy of such report
2 and any comments and recommendations
3 of the Secretary concerning such report
4 that the Secretary determines appropriate.

5 (ii) AVAILABILITY TO THE PUBLIC.—

6 The Secretary shall publish on a publicly
7 accessible website of the Department such
8 report and such comments and rec-
9 ommendations as may have been submitted
10 along with such report.

11 (iii) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL
12 COMMITTEES.—In this subparagraph, the
13 term “appropriate congressional commit-
14 tees” means—

15 (I) the Committees on Veterans’
16 Affairs of the Senate and House of
17 Representatives

18 (II) the Special Committee on
19 Aging of the Senate; and

20 (III) the Committee on Edu-
21 cation and the Workforce of the
22 House of Representatives.

23 (g) ADVISORY COMMITTEE PERSONNEL AND RE-

24 SOURCE MATTERS.—

1 (1) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—A member
2 of the Commission who is not an officer or employee
3 of the Federal Government shall not be compensated
4 for the performance of the duties of the Advisory
5 Committee.

6 (2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—A member of the Ad-
7 visory Committee shall be allowed travel expenses,
8 including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates
9 authorized for employees of agencies under sub-
10 chapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States
11 Code, while away from their homes or regular places
12 of business in the performance of services for the
13 Advisory Committee.

14 (3) RESOURCES.—The Secretary shall ensure
15 that such personnel, funding, and other resources
16 are made available to the Advisory Committee as the
17 Secretary determines appropriate to carry out the
18 duties of the Advisory Committee.

19 (4) INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall furnish
20 to the Advisory Committee such information as the
21 Advisory Committee may request from the Sec-
22 retary, subject to applicable provisions of law.

23 (h) TERMINATION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE.—The
24 Advisory Committee shall terminate on the date that is
25 10 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

1 **SEC. 3. ABOLITION OF INACTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**

2 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-
3 ment of this Act and before establishing the Veterans Ad-
4 visory Committee on Equal Access under section 2, the
5 Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

6 (1) abolish an advisory committee of the De-
7 partment of Veterans Affairs that—

8 (A) was not established by an Act of Con-
9 gress; and

10 (B) is inactive;

11 (2) consolidate two advisory committees de-
12 scribed in paragraph (1); or

13 (3) submit to the Committees on Veterans' Af-
14 fairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a
15 recommendation to abolish an advisory committee of
16 the Department that—

17 (A) was established by an Act of Congress;
18 and

19 (B) is inactive.

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