

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8381

To direct the Comptroller General of the United States and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to each report on certain disparities that affect the receipt of certain benefits administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 14, 2024

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

A BILL

To direct the Comptroller General of the United States and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to each report on certain disparities that affect the receipt of certain benefits administered by the Secretary, 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 “Strengthening Trans-
5 parent Reporting to Improve Veteran Equality Act of
6 2024” or the “STRIVE Act of 2024”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

2 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
3 ings:

4 (1) According to an internal report of the De-
5 partment of Defense, Black members of the Armed
6 Forces are more likely than White members to be
7 the subject of—

8 (A) an administrative action, including an
9 investigation into alleged misconduct;

10 (B) a nonjudicial punishment; or

11 (C) a trial by court-martial.

12 (2) Certain administrative actions, nonjudicial
13 punishments, and court-martial sentences may ad-
14 versely affect the eligibility of a former member of
15 the Armed Forces to receive disability benefits ad-
16 ministered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

17 (3) According to the report titled “VA Dis-
18 ability Benefits: Actions Needed to Further Examine
19 Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Compensation”
20 (GAO–23–106097), published on July 26, 2023—

21 (A) Black, non-Hispanic applicants for
22 such benefits experience the lowest rate of ap-
23 proval for such benefits compared to applicants
24 of other races or ethnicities;

1 (B) a Black, non-Hispanic applicant is 14
2 percent less likely to be approved for such bene-
3 fits than a White, non-Hispanic applicant; and

4 (C) the rates of approval for such benefits
5 for Black, male applicants are between 3 and
6 22 percent lower than the rates of approval for
7 applicants of other races or genders.

8 (4) Female former members of the Armed
9 Forces are less likely to apply for such benefits than
10 male former members.

11 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
12 gress that—

13 (1) each former member of the Armed Forces
14 made heroic sacrifices while serving in the Armed
15 Forces, such as risking the life of the former mem-
16 ber, to preserve the freedom of the United States;
17 and

18 (2) the collection and publication by the Sec-
19 retary of accurate data regarding the race, ethnicity,
20 and gender of all applicants for, and recipients of,
21 disability benefits administered by the Secretary
22 would enable the Secretary and Congress to identify
23 and address any disparity based on the race, eth-
24 nicity, or gender of a former member of the Armed
25 Forces, with respect to the receipt of such benefits.

1 **SEC. 3. REPORTS ON RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND GENDER DIS-**
2 **PARITIES WITH RESPECT TO DISABILITY**
3 **BENEFITS ADMINISTERED BY THE SEC-**
4 **RETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

5 (a) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE RE-
6 PORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the en-
7 actment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United
8 States shall submit to the appropriate congressional com-
9 mittees a report that includes the following elements:

10 (1) Statistics for the 15-year period imme-
11 diately prior to the date of the enactment of this Act
12 that describe—

13 (A) the characterization of discharge or
14 dismissal of each former member of the Armed
15 Forces who separated from the Armed Forces
16 during such period, disaggregated by the race,
17 ethnicity, and gender of the former member;
18 and

19 (B) the number of such former members,
20 disaggregated by the race, ethnicity, and gender
21 of each such former member, who—

22 (i) requested review of the character-
23 ization of discharge or dismissal by an ap-
24 propriate board;

1 (ii) received review of the character-
2 ization of discharge or dismissal by an ap-
3 propriate board;

4 (iii) received a change to the charac-
5 terization of discharge or dismissal as a re-
6 sult of a decision by an appropriate board;

7 (iv) applied for disability benefits ad-
8 ministered by the Secretary of Veterans
9 Affairs;

10 (v) applied for and received such ben-
11 efits; and

12 (vi) applied for and were denied such
13 benefits for reason of characterization of
14 discharge or dismissal.

15 (2) The determination of the Comptroller Gen-
16 eral whether there is a disparity based on the race,
17 ethnicity, or gender of a former member, with re-
18 spect to the receipt of—

19 (A) review of the characterization of dis-
20 charge or dismissal by an appropriate board; or

21 (B) a change to the characterization of dis-
22 charge or dismissal as a result of a decision by
23 an appropriate board.

24 (3) The assessment of the Comptroller General
25 whether there is a relationship between—

1 (A) any disparity determined under para-
2 graph (2); and

3 (B) any disparity determined by the Comp-
4 troller General in the covered report, with re-
5 spect to disability benefits administered by the
6 Secretary.

7 (b) SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS: REPORTS;
8 PLAN; IMPLEMENTATION.—

9 (1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 365 days
10 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
11 retary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Com-
12 mittees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the
13 House of Representatives, and make available on a
14 publicly accessible website of the Department of Vet-
15 erans Affairs, a report that includes the following
16 elements:

17 (A) A description of any specific actions
18 taken or processes implemented by the Sec-
19 retary to address the limitations identified by
20 the Comptroller General in the covered report,
21 with respect to the collection and availability of
22 data regarding each racial and ethnic group to
23 which a former member of the Armed Forces
24 belongs.

1 (B) An identification by the Secretary,
2 based on information in the covered report, of
3 every significant cause of a racial, ethnic, or
4 gender disparity with respect to disability bene-
5 fits administered by the Secretary.

6 (C) The three-year plan of the Secretary to
7 address each significant cause identified under
8 subparagraph (B).

9 (2) IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAN; ANNUAL RE-
10 PORT.—The Secretary shall—

11 (A) implement the plan under paragraph
12 (1)(C) not later than one day after the submis-
13 sion of the report under paragraph (1); and

14 (B) annually for each year during which
15 the Secretary is carrying out such plan, make
16 available on a publicly accessible website of the
17 Department a report summarizing, for the pe-
18 riod covered by the report, the actions of the
19 Secretary pursuant to such plan.

20 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

21 (1) The term “appropriate board” means—

22 (A) a board for the correction of military
23 records under section 1552 of title 10, United
24 States Code; or

1 (B) a board of review under section 1553
2 of such title.

3 (2) The term “appropriate congressional com-
4 mittees” means—

5 (A) the Committee on Armed Services of
6 the Senate;

7 (B) the Committee on Armed Services of
8 the House of Representatives;

9 (C) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of
10 the Senate; and

11 (D) the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of
12 the House of Representatives.

13 (3) The term “covered report” means the re-
14 port titled “VA Disability Benefits: Actions Needed
15 to Further Examine Racial and Ethnic Disparities
16 in Compensation” (GAO–23–106097), published on
17 July 26, 2023.

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