

PUBLIC LAW 108-183 · DECEMBER 16, 2003

VETERANS BENEFITS ACT OF 2003

Prime Sponsor: Mr. Christopher H. Smith (NJ)
H.R. 2297 - Signed by the President on December 16, 2003

Public Law 108-183
108th Congress

An Act

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Dec. 16, 2003

[H.R. 2297]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Benefits Act of 2003”.

(b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. References to title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—SURVIVOR BENEFITS

- Sec. 101. Retention of certain veterans survivor benefits for surviving spouses remarrying after age 57.
Sec. 102. Benefits for children with spina bifida of veterans of certain service in Korea.
Sec. 103. Alternative beneficiaries for National Service Life Insurance and United States Government Life Insurance.
Sec. 104. Payment of benefits accrued and unpaid at time of death.

TITLE II—BENEFITS FOR FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR AND FOR FILIPINO VETERANS

SUBTITLE A—FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR

- Sec. 201. Presumptions of service-connection relating to diseases and disabilities of former prisoners of war.

SUBTITLE B—FILIPINO VETERANS

- Sec. 211. Rate of payment of benefits for certain Filipino veterans and their survivors residing in the United States.
Sec. 212. Burial benefits for new Philippine Scouts residing in the United States.
Sec. 213. Extension of authority to maintain regional office in the Republic of the Philippines.

TITLE III—EDUCATION BENEFITS, EMPLOYMENT PROVISIONS, AND RELATED MATTERS

- Sec. 301. Expansion of Montgomery GI Bill education benefits for certain self-employment training.
Sec. 302. Increase in rates of survivors’ and dependents’ educational assistance.
Sec. 303. Restoration of survivors’ and dependents’ education benefits of individuals being ordered to full-time National Guard duty.
Sec. 304. Rounding down of certain cost-of-living adjustments on educational assistance.
Sec. 305. Authorization for State approving agencies to approve certain entrepreneurship courses.
Sec. 306. Repeal of provisions relating to obsolete education loan program.
Sec. 307. Six-year extension of the Veterans’ Advisory Committee on Education.
Sec. 308. Procurement program for small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans.

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38 USC 101 note.

Sec. 309. Outstationing of Transition Assistance Program personnel.

TITLE IV—HOUSING BENEFITS AND RELATED MATTERS

Sec. 401. Authorization to provide adapted housing assistance to certain disabled members of the Armed Forces who remain on active duty.

Sec. 402. Increase in amounts for certain adaptive benefits for disabled veterans.

Sec. 403. Permanent authority for housing loans for members of the Selected Reserve.

Sec. 404. Reinstatement of minimum requirements for sale of vendee loans.

Sec. 405. Adjustment to home loan fees.

Sec. 406. One-year extension of procedures on liquidation sales of defaulted home loans guaranteed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

TITLE V—BURIAL BENEFITS

Sec. 501. Burial plot allowance.

Sec. 502. Eligibility of surviving spouses who remarry for burial in national cemeteries.

Sec. 503. Permanent authority for State cemetery grants program.

TITLE VI—EXPOSURE TO HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

Sec. 601. Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program of Department of Defense.

Sec. 602. Study on disposition of Air Force Health Study.

Sec. 603. Funding of Medical Follow-Up Agency of Institute of Medicine of National Academy of Sciences for epidemiological research on members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

TITLE VII—OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 701. Time limitations on receipt of claim information pursuant to requests of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 702. Clarification of applicability of prohibition on assignment of veterans benefits to agreements requiring payment of future receipt of benefits.

Sec. 703. Six-year extension of Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

Sec. 704. Temporary authority for performance of medical disabilities examinations by contract physicians.

Sec. 705. Forfeiture of benefits for subversive activities.

Sec. 706. Two-year extension of round-down requirement for compensation cost-of-living adjustments.

Sec. 707. Codification of requirement for expeditious treatment of cases on remand.

Sec. 708. Technical and clerical amendments.

SEC. 2. REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.

Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—SURVIVOR BENEFITS

SEC. 101. RETENTION OF CERTAIN VETERANS SURVIVOR BENEFITS FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES REMARRYING AFTER AGE 57.

38 USC 103.

(a) **EXCEPTION TO TERMINATION OF BENEFITS UPON REMARRIAGE.**—Section 103(d)(2)(B) is amended by striking “The remarriage after age 55” and inserting “The remarriage after age 57 of the surviving spouse of a veteran shall not bar the furnishing of benefits specified in paragraph (5) to such person as the surviving spouse of the veteran. Notwithstanding the previous sentence, the remarriage after age 55”.

(b) **COORDINATION OF BENEFITS.**—Section 1311 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(e) In the case of an individual who is eligible for dependency and indemnity compensation under this section by reason of section 103(d)(2)(B) of this title who is also eligible for benefits under another provision of law by reason of such individual’s status as

the surviving spouse of a veteran, then, notwithstanding any other provision of law (other than section 5304(b)(3) of this title), no reduction in benefits under such other provision of law shall be made by reason of such individual's eligibility for benefits under this section."

(c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall take effect on January 1, 2004. 38 USC 103 note.

(d) **RETROACTIVE BENEFITS PROHIBITED.**—No benefit may be paid to any person by reason of the amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) for any period before the effective date specified in subsection (c). 38 USC 103 note.

(e) **APPLICATION FOR BENEFITS.**—In the case of an individual who but for having remarried would be eligible for benefits under title 38, United States Code, by reason of the amendment made by subsection (a) and whose remarriage was before the date of the enactment of this Act and after the individual had attained age 57, the individual shall be eligible for such benefits by reason of such amendment only if the individual submits an application for such benefits to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs not later than the end of the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act. Effective date.
38 USC 103 note.

(f) **TECHNICAL CORRECTION.**—Section 101(b) of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-330; 116 Stat. 2821; 38 U.S.C. 103 note) is amended by striking "during the 1-year period" and all that follows through "(c)" and inserting "before the end of the one-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003".

SEC. 102. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPINA BIFIDA OF VETERANS OF CERTAIN SERVICE IN KOREA.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Chapter 18 is amended—

(1) by redesignating subchapter III, and sections 1821, 1822, 1823, and 1824, as subchapter IV, and sections 1831, 1832, 1833, and 1834, respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subchapter II the following new subchapter III:

"SUBCHAPTER III—CHILDREN OF CERTAIN KOREA SERVICE VETERANS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA

"§ 1821. Benefits for children of certain Korea service veterans born with spina bifida

"(a) **BENEFITS AUTHORIZED.**—The Secretary may provide to any child of a veteran of covered service in Korea who is suffering from spina bifida the health care, vocational training and rehabilitation, and monetary allowance required to be paid to a child of a Vietnam veteran who is suffering from spina bifida under subchapter I of this chapter as if such child of a veteran of covered service in Korea were a child of a Vietnam veteran who is suffering from spina bifida under such subchapter.

"(b) **SPINA BIFIDA CONDITIONS COVERED.**—This section applies with respect to all forms and manifestations of spina bifida, except spina bifida occulta.

"(c) **VETERAN OF COVERED SERVICE IN KOREA.**—For purposes of this section, a veteran of covered service in Korea is any individual, without regard to the characterization of that individual's service, who—

“(1) served in the active military, naval, or air service in or near the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ), as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, during the period beginning on September 1, 1967, and ending on August 31, 1971; and

“(2) is determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to have been exposed to a herbicide agent during such service in or near the Korean demilitarized zone.

“(d) HERBICIDE AGENT.—For purposes of this section, the term ‘herbicide agent’ means a chemical in a herbicide used in support of United States and allied military operations in or near the Korean demilitarized zone, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, during the period beginning on September 1, 1967, and ending on August 31, 1971.”

(b) CHILD DEFINED.—Section 1831, as redesignated by subsection (a) of this section, is amended by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following new paragraph (1):

“(1) The term ‘child’ means the following:

“(A) For purposes of subchapters I and II of this chapter, an individual, regardless of age or marital status, who—

“(i) is the natural child of a Vietnam veteran; and

“(ii) was conceived after the date on which that veteran first entered the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era.

“(B) For purposes of subchapter III of this chapter, an individual, regardless of age or marital status, who—

“(i) is the natural child of a veteran of covered service in Korea (as determined for purposes of section 1821 of this title); and

“(ii) was conceived after the date on which that veteran first entered service described in subsection (c) of that section.”

(c) NONDUPLICATION OF BENEFITS.—Subsection (a) of section 1834, as redesignated by subsection (a) of this section, is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “In the case of a child eligible for benefits under subchapter I or II of this chapter who is also eligible for benefits under subchapter III of this chapter, a monetary allowance shall be paid under the subchapter of this chapter elected by the child.”

(d) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Section 1811(1)(A) is amended by striking “section 1821(1)” and inserting “section 1831(1)”.

(2) The heading for chapter 18 is amended to read as follows:

“CHAPTER 18—BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS AND CERTAIN OTHER VETERANS”.

(e) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—(1) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 18 is amended by striking the items relating to subchapter III and sections 1821, 1822, 1823, and 1824 and inserting the following new items:

“SUBCHAPTER III—CHILDREN OF CERTAIN KOREA SERVICE VETERANS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA

“1821. Benefits for children of certain Korea service veterans born with spina bifida.

“SUBCHAPTER IV—GENERAL PROVISIONS

- “1831. Definitions.
- “1832. Applicability of certain administrative provisions.
- “1833. Treatment of receipt of monetary allowance and other benefits.
- “1834. Nonduplication of benefits.”

(2) The table of chapters at the beginning of title 38, United States Code, and at the beginning of part II, are each amended by striking the item relating to chapter 18 and inserting the following new item:

“18. Benefits for Children of Vietnam Veterans and Certain Other Veterans 1802”.

SEC. 103. ALTERNATIVE BENEFICIARIES FOR NATIONAL SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE AND UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT LIFE INSURANCE.

(a) NATIONAL SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE.—Section 1917 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(f)(1) Following the death of the insured and in a case not covered by subsection (d)—

“(A) if the first beneficiary otherwise entitled to payment of the insurance does not make a claim for such payment within two years after the death of the insured, payment may be made to another beneficiary designated by the insured, in the order of precedence as designated by the insured, as if the first beneficiary had predeceased the insured; and

“(B) if, within four years after the death of the insured, no claim has been filed by a person designated by the insured as a beneficiary and the Secretary has not received any notice in writing that any such claim will be made, payment may (notwithstanding any other provision of law) be made to such person as may in the judgment of the Secretary be equitably entitled thereto.

Deadline.

“(2) Payment of insurance under paragraph (1) shall be a bar to recovery by any other person.”.

(b) UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT LIFE INSURANCE.—Section 1952 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c)(1) Following the death of the insured and in a case not covered by section 1950 of this title—

“(A) if the first beneficiary otherwise entitled to payment of the insurance does not make a claim for such payment within two years after the death of the insured, payment may be made to another beneficiary designated by the insured, in the order of precedence as designated by the insured, as if the first beneficiary had predeceased the insured; and

“(B) if, within four years after the death of the insured, no claim has been filed by a person designated by the insured as a beneficiary and the Secretary has not received any notice in writing that any such claim will be made, payment may (notwithstanding any other provision of law) be made to such person as may in the judgment of the Secretary be equitably entitled thereto.

“(2) Payment of insurance under paragraph (1) shall be a bar to recovery by any other person.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall take effect on October 1, 2004.

38 USC 1917 note.

(d) TRANSITION PROVISION.—In the case of a person insured under subchapter I or II of chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code, who dies before the effective date of the amendments made

38 USC 1917 note.

by subsections (a) and (b), as specified by subsection (c), the two-year and four-year periods specified in subsection (f)(1) of section 1917 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and subsection (c)(1) of section 1952 of such title, as added by subsection (b), as applicable, shall for purposes of the applicable subsection be treated as being the two-year and four-year periods, respectively, beginning on the effective date of such amendments, as so specified.

SEC. 104. PAYMENT OF BENEFITS ACCRUED AND UNPAID AT TIME OF DEATH.

(a) **REPEAL OF TWO-YEAR LIMITATION ON PAYMENT.**—Section 5121(a) is amended by striking “for a period not to exceed two years” in the matter preceding paragraph (1).

(b) **PAYMENT RECIPIENTS FOR BENEFICIARIES UNDER CHAPTER 18.**—Such section is further amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph (4);

(2) by redesignating paragraph (5) as paragraph (6); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (4) the following new paragraph (5):

“(5) Upon the death of a child claiming benefits under chapter 18 of this title, to the surviving parents.”.

(c) **TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS.**—Such section is further amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking the comma after “or decisions”;

(2) by striking the semicolon at the end of paragraphs (1), (2), (3), and (4), and at the end of subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (2), and inserting a period.

(d) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall apply with respect to deaths occurring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Applicability.
38 USC 5121
note.

TITLE II—BENEFITS FOR FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR AND FOR FILIPINO VETERANS

Subtitle A—Former Prisoners of War

SEC. 201. PRESUMPTIONS OF SERVICE-CONNECTION RELATING TO DISEASES AND DISABILITIES OF FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR.

Subsection (b) of section 1112 is amended to read as follows:

“(b)(1) For the purposes of section 1110 of this title and subject to the provisions of section 1113 of this title, in the case of a veteran who is a former prisoner of war—

“(A) a disease specified in paragraph (2) which became manifest to a degree of 10 percent or more after active military, naval, or air service shall be considered to have been incurred in or aggravated by such service, notwithstanding that there is no record of such disease during the period of service; and

“(B) if the veteran was detained or interned as a prisoner of war for not less than thirty days, a disease specified in paragraph (3) which became manifest to a degree of 10 percent or more after active military, naval, or air service shall be

considered to have been incurred in or aggravated by such service, notwithstanding that there is no record of such disease during the period of service.

“(2) The diseases specified in this paragraph are the following:

“(A) Psychosis.

“(B) Any of the anxiety states.

“(C) Dysthymic disorder (or depressive neurosis).

“(D) Organic residuals of frostbite, if the Secretary determines that the veteran was detained or interned in climatic conditions consistent with the occurrence of frostbite.

“(E) Post-traumatic osteoarthritis.

“(3) The diseases specified in this paragraph are the following:

“(A) Avitaminosis.

“(B) Beriberi (including beriberi heart disease).

“(C) Chronic dysentery.

“(D) Helminthiasis.

“(E) Malnutrition (including optic atrophy associated with malnutrition).

“(F) Pellagra.

“(G) Any other nutritional deficiency.

“(H) Cirrhosis of the liver.

“(I) Peripheral neuropathy except where directly related to infectious causes.

“(J) Irritable bowel syndrome.

“(K) Peptic ulcer disease.”

Subtitle B—Filipino Veterans

SEC. 211. RATE OF PAYMENT OF BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN FILIPINO VETERANS AND THEIR SURVIVORS RESIDING IN THE UNITED STATES.

(a) RATE OF PAYMENT.—Section 107 is amended—

(1) in the second sentence of subsection (b), by striking “Payments” and inserting “Except as provided in subsection (c), payments”; and

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) by inserting “and subchapter II of chapter 13 (except section 1312(a)) of this title” after “chapter 11 of this title”;

(B) by striking “in subsection (a)” and inserting “in subsection (a) or (b)”; and

(C) by striking “of subsection (a)” and inserting “of the applicable subsection”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply to benefits paid for months beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Applicability.
38 USC 107 note.

SEC. 212. BURIAL BENEFITS FOR NEW PHILIPPINE SCOUTS RESIDING IN THE UNITED STATES.

(a) BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY.—Section 107, as amended by section 211 of this Act, is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)(2)—

(A) by striking “and” and inserting a comma; and

(B) by inserting “, 23, and 24 (to the extent provided for in section 2402(8))” after “(except section 1312(a))”;

(2) in the second sentence of subsection (b), as so amended, by inserting “or (d)” after “subsection (c)”;

(3) in subsection (d)(1), by inserting “or (b), as otherwise applicable,” after “subsection (a)”;

(4) in subsection (d)(2), by inserting “or whose service is described in subsection (b) and who dies after the date of the enactment of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003,” after “November 1, 2000.”

(b) NATIONAL CEMETERY INTERMENT.—Section 2402(8) is amended by striking “section 107(a)” and inserting “subsection (a) or (b) of section 107”.

Applicability.
38 USC 107 note.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to deaths occurring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 213. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO MAINTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES.

Section 315(b) is amended by striking “December 31, 2003” and inserting “December 31, 2009”.

TITLE III—EDUCATION BENEFITS, EMPLOYMENT PROVISIONS, AND RELATED MATTERS

SEC. 301. EXPANSION OF MONTGOMERY GI BILL EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN SELF-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING.

(a) DEFINITION OF TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT.—Section 3452(e) is amended by striking “means any” and all that follows and inserting “means any of the following:

“(1) An establishment providing apprentice or other on-job training, including those under the supervision of a college or university or any State department of education.

“(2) An establishment providing self-employment on-job training consisting of full-time training for a period of less than six months that is needed or accepted for purposes of obtaining licensure to engage in a self-employment occupation or required for ownership and operation of a franchise that is the objective of the training.

“(3) A State board of vocational education.

“(4) A Federal or State apprenticeship registration agency.

“(5) A joint apprenticeship committee established pursuant to the Act of August 16, 1937, popularly known as the ‘National Apprenticeship Act’ (29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.).

“(6) An agency of the Federal Government authorized to supervise such training.”

Applicability.
38 USC 3452
note.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is six months after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply to self-employment on-job training approved and pursued on or after that date.

SEC. 302. INCREASE IN RATES OF SURVIVORS’ AND DEPENDENTS’ EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) SURVIVORS’ AND DEPENDENTS’ EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—Section 3532 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking “at the monthly rate of” and all that follows and inserting “at the monthly rate of \$788 for full-time, \$592 for three-quarter-time, or \$394 for half-time pursuit.”; and

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking “at the rate of” and all that follows and inserting “at the rate of the lesser of—

“(A) the established charges for tuition and fees that the educational institution involved requires similarly circumstanced nonveterans enrolled in the same program to pay; or

“(B) \$788 per month for a full-time course.”;

(2) in subsection (b), by striking “\$670” and inserting “\$788”; and

(3) in subsection (c)(2), by striking “shall be” and all that follows and inserting “shall be \$636 for full-time, \$477 for three-quarter-time, or \$319 for half-time pursuit.”

(b) CORRESPONDENCE COURSES.—Section 3534(b) is amended by striking “\$670” and inserting “\$788”.

(c) SPECIAL RESTORATIVE TRAINING.—Section 3542(a) is amended—

(1) by striking “\$670” and inserting “\$788”; and

(2) by striking “\$210” each place it appears and inserting “\$247”.

(d) APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING.—Section 3687(b)(2) is amended by striking “shall be \$488 for the first six months” and all that follows and inserting “shall be \$574 for the first six months, \$429 for the second six months, \$285 for the third six months, and \$144 for the fourth and any succeeding six-month period of training.”

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on July 1, 2004, and shall apply with respect to educational assistance allowances payable under chapter 35 and section 3687(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, for months beginning on or after that date.

Applicability.
38 USC 3532
note.

SEC. 303. RESTORATION OF SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATION BENEFITS OF INDIVIDUALS BEING ORDERED TO FULL-TIME NATIONAL GUARD DUTY.

(a) DELIMITING DATE.—Section 3512(h) is amended by inserting “or is involuntarily ordered to full-time National Guard duty under section 502(f) of title 32,” after “title 10,”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect as of September 11, 2001.

38 USC 3512
note.

SEC. 304. ROUNDING DOWN OF CERTAIN COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS ON EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) BASIC EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER MONTGOMERY GI BILL.—Section 3015(h) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively;

(2) by inserting “(1)” after “(h)”;

(3) by striking “(rounded to the nearest dollar)”;

(4) in subparagraph (B), as so redesignated, by striking “paragraph (1)” and inserting “subparagraph (A)”;

(5) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(2) Any increase under paragraph (1) in a rate with respect to a fiscal year after fiscal year 2004 and before fiscal year 2014

shall be rounded down to the next lower whole dollar amount. Any such increase with respect to a fiscal year after fiscal year 2013 shall be rounded to the nearest whole dollar amount.”.

(b) SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—Section 3564 is amended—

(1) by inserting “(a)” before “With”;

(2) by striking “(rounded to the nearest dollar)”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(b) Any increase under subsection (a) in a rate with respect to a fiscal year after fiscal year 2004 and before fiscal year 2014 shall be rounded down to the next lower whole dollar amount. Any such increase with respect to a fiscal year after fiscal year 2013 shall be rounded to the nearest whole dollar amount.”.

SEC. 305. AUTHORIZATION FOR STATE APPROVING AGENCIES TO APPROVE CERTAIN ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSES.

(a) APPROVAL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSES.—Section 3675 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c)(1) A State approving agency may approve the entrepreneurship courses offered by a qualified provider of entrepreneurship courses.

“(2) For purposes of this subsection, the term ‘entrepreneurship course’ means a non-degree, non-credit course of business education that enables or assists a person to start or enhance a small business concern (as defined pursuant to section 3(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632(a))).

“(3) Subsection (a) and paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (b) shall not apply to—

“(A) an entrepreneurship course offered by a qualified provider of entrepreneurship courses; and

“(B) a qualified provider of entrepreneurship courses by reason of such provider offering one or more entrepreneurship courses.”.

(b) BUSINESS OWNERS NOT TREATED AS ALREADY QUALIFIED.—Section 3471 is amended by inserting before the last sentence the following: “The Secretary shall not treat a person as already qualified for the objective of a program of education offered by a qualified provider of entrepreneurship courses solely because such person is the owner or operator of a business.”.

(c) INCLUSION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSES IN DEFINITION OF PROGRAM OF EDUCATION.—Subsection (b) of section 3452 is amended by adding at the end the following: “Such term also includes any course, or combination of courses, offered by a qualified provider of entrepreneurship courses.”.

(d) INCLUSION OF QUALIFIED PROVIDER OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSES IN DEFINITION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.—Subsection (c) of section 3452 is amended by adding at the end the following: “Such term also includes any qualified provider of entrepreneurship courses.”.

(e) DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED PROVIDER OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSES.—Section 3452 is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) The term ‘qualified provider of entrepreneurship courses’ means any of the following entities insofar as such entity offers, sponsors, or cosponsors an entrepreneurship course (as defined in section 3675(c)(2) of this title):

“(1) Any small business development center described in section 21 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 648).

“(2) The National Veterans Business Development Corporation (established under section 33 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657c)).”

(f) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply to courses approved by State approving agencies after the date of the enactment of this Act. Applicability.
38 USC 3452
note.

SEC. 306. REPEAL OF PROVISIONS RELATING TO OBSOLETE EDUCATION LOAN PROGRAM.

(a) **TERMINATION OF PROGRAM.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may not make a loan under subchapter III of chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, after the date of the enactment of this Act. 38 USC 3698
note.

(b) **DISCHARGE OF LIABILITIES.**—Effective as of the date of the transfer of funds under subsection (c)— Effective date.
38 USC 3698
note.

(1) any liability on an education loan under subchapter III of chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, that is outstanding as of such date shall be deemed discharged; and

(2) the right of the United States to recover an overpayment declared under section 3698(e)(1) of such title that is outstanding as of such date shall be deemed waived.

(c) **TERMINATION OF LOAN FUND.**—(1) Effective as of the day before the date of the repeal under this section of subchapter III of chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, all monies in the revolving fund of the Treasury known as the “Department of Veterans Affairs Education Loan Fund” shall be transferred to the Department of Veterans Affairs Readjustment Benefits Account, and the revolving fund shall be closed.

(2) Any monies transferred to the Department of Veterans Affairs Readjustment Benefits Account under paragraph (1) shall be merged with amounts in that account and shall be available for the same purposes, and subject to the same conditions and limitations, as amounts in that account.

(d) **USE OF ENTITLEMENT TO VETERANS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR EDUCATION LOAN PROGRAM.**—Section 3462(a) is amended by striking paragraph (2).

(e) **REPEAL OF EDUCATION LOAN PROGRAM.**—Subchapter III of chapter 36 is repealed. 38 USC 3698,
3699.

(f) **CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—(1) Section 3485(e)(1) is amended by striking “(other than an education loan under subchapter III)”.

(2) Section 3512 is amended by striking subsection (f).

(g) **CLERICAL AMENDMENT.**—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 36 is amended by striking the items relating to subchapter III and sections 3698 and 3699.

(h) **EFFECTIVE DATES.**—(1) The amendments made by subsection (d) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act. 38 USC 3462
note.

(2) The amendments made by subsections (e), (f), and (g) shall take effect 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act. 38 USC 3485
note.

SEC. 307. SIX-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE VETERANS’ ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

(a) **MEMBERSHIP.**—Subsection (a) of section 3692 is amended in the second sentence by inserting “, to the maximum extent practicable,” after “The committee shall also”.

(b) **EXTENSION.**—Subsection (c) of that section is amended by striking “December 31, 2003” and inserting “December 31, 2009”.

(c) **TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS.**—That section is further amended—

(1) in subsections (a) and (b), by striking “chapter 106” each place it appears and inserting “chapter 1606”; and

(2) in subsection (b), by striking “chapter 30” and inserting “chapters 30”.

SEC. 308. PROCUREMENT PROGRAM FOR SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS.

15 USC 631 note. The Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 631 et seq.) is amended by redesignating section 36 as section 37 and by inserting after section 35 the following new section:

15 USC 657f. **“SEC. 36. PROCUREMENT PROGRAM FOR SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY SERVICE-DISABLED VETERANS.**

“(a) **SOLE SOURCE CONTRACTS.**—In accordance with this section, a contracting officer may award a sole source contract to any small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans if—

“(1) such concern is determined to be a responsible contractor with respect to performance of such contract opportunity and the contracting officer does not have a reasonable expectation that 2 or more small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans will submit offers for the contracting opportunity;

“(2) the anticipated award price of the contract (including options) will not exceed—

“(A) \$5,000,000, in the case of a contract opportunity assigned a standard industrial classification code for manufacturing; or

“(B) \$3,000,000, in the case of any other contract opportunity; and

“(3) in the estimation of the contracting officer, the contract award can be made at a fair and reasonable price.

“(b) **RESTRICTED COMPETITION.**—In accordance with this section, a contracting officer may award contracts on the basis of competition restricted to small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans if the contracting officer has a reasonable expectation that not less than 2 small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans will submit offers and that the award can be made at a fair market price.

“(c) **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER CONTRACTING PREFERENCES.**—A procurement may not be made from a source on the basis of a preference provided under subsection (a) or (b) if the procurement would otherwise be made from a different source under section 4124 or 4125 of title 18, United States Code, or the Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act (41 U.S.C. 46 et seq.).

Applicability. “(d) **ENFORCEMENT; PENALTIES.**—Rules similar to the rules of paragraphs (5) and (6) of section 8(m) shall apply for purposes of this section.

“(e) **CONTRACTING OFFICER.**—For purposes of this section, the term ‘contracting officer’ has the meaning given such term in section 27(f)(5) of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act (41 U.S.C. 423(f)(5)).”.

SEC. 309. OUTSTATIONING OF TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PERSONNEL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) Chapter 41 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 4113. Outstationing of Transition Assistance Program personnel

“(a) STATIONING OF TAP PERSONNEL AT OVERSEAS MILITARY INSTALLATIONS.—(1) The Secretary—

“(A) shall station employees of the Veterans’ Employment and Training Service, or contractors under subsection (c), at each veterans assistance office described in paragraph (2); and

“(B) may station such employees or contractors at such other military installations outside the United States as the Secretary, after consultation with the Secretary of Defense, determines to be appropriate or desirable to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

“(2) Veterans assistance offices referred to in paragraph (1)(A) are those offices that are established by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on military installations pursuant to the second sentence of section 7723(a) of this title.

“(b) FUNCTIONS.—Employees (or contractors) stationed at military installations pursuant to subsection (a) shall provide, in person, counseling, assistance in identifying employment and training opportunities, help in obtaining such employment and training, and other related information and services to members of the Armed Forces who are being separated from active duty, and the spouses of such members, under the Transition Assistance Program and Disabled Transition Assistance Program established in section 1144 of title 10.

“(c) AUTHORITY TO CONTRACT WITH PRIVATE ENTITIES.—The Secretary, consistent with section 1144 of title 10, may enter into contracts with public or private entities to provide, in person, some or all of the counseling, assistance, information and services under the Transition Assistance Program required under subsection (a).”.

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“4113. Outstationing of Transition Assistance Program personnel.”.

(b) DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor shall implement section 4113 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and shall have employees of the Veterans’ Employment and Training Service, or contractors, to carry out that section at the military installations involved by such date.

38 USC 4113
note.

(c) ADDITIONAL AMENDMENT.—(1) The second sentence of section 7723(a) is amended by inserting “and taking into account recommendations, if any, of the Secretary of Labor” after “Secretary of Defense”.

(2) The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to offices established after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Applicability.
38 USC 7723
note.

TITLE IV—HOUSING BENEFITS AND RELATED MATTERS

SEC. 401. AUTHORIZATION TO PROVIDE ADAPTED HOUSING ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN DISABLED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO REMAIN ON ACTIVE DUTY.

Section 2101 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c)(1) The Secretary may provide assistance under subsection (a) to a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who is suffering from a disability described in paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of that subsection if such disability is the result of an injury incurred or disease contracted in or aggravated in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service. Such assistance shall be provided to the same extent as assistance is provided under that subsection to veterans eligible for assistance under that subsection and subject to the requirements of the second sentence of that subsection.

“(2) The Secretary may provide assistance under subsection (b) to a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who is suffering from a disability described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of paragraph (1) of that subsection if such disability is the result of an injury incurred or disease contracted in or aggravated in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service. Such assistance shall be provided to the same extent as assistance is provided under that subsection to veterans eligible for assistance under that subsection and subject to the requirements of paragraph (2) of that subsection.”.

SEC. 402. INCREASE IN AMOUNTS FOR CERTAIN ADAPTIVE BENEFITS FOR DISABLED VETERANS.

(a) INCREASE IN ASSISTANCE AMOUNT FOR SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING.—Section 2102 is amended—

- (1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1) of subsection (a), by striking “\$48,000” and inserting “\$50,000”; and
- (2) in subsection (b)(2), by striking “\$9,250” and inserting “\$10,000”.

(b) INCREASE IN AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR AUTOMOBILE AND ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR CERTAIN DISABLED VETERANS.—Section 3902(a) is amended by striking “\$9,000” and inserting “\$11,000”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall apply with respect to assistance furnished on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 403. PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR HOUSING LOANS FOR MEMBERS OF THE SELECTED RESERVE.

Section 3702(a)(2)(E) is amended by striking “For the period” and all that follows through “each” and inserting “Each”.

SEC. 404. REINSTATEMENT OF MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR SALE OF VENDEE LOANS.

(a) REINSTATEMENT.—Subsection (a) of section 3733 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(7) During the period that begins on the date of the enactment of the Veterans’ Benefits Act of 2003 and ends on September 30,

Applicability.
38 USC 2102
note.

2013, the Secretary shall carry out the provisions of this subsection as if—

“(A) the references in the first sentence of paragraph (1) to ‘65 percent’ and ‘may be financed’ were references to ‘85 percent’ and ‘shall be financed’, respectively;

“(B) the second sentence of paragraph (1) were repealed; and

“(C) the reference in paragraph (2) to ‘September 30, 1990,’ were a reference to ‘September 30, 2013,’.”

(b) **STYLISTIC AMENDMENTS.**—Such section is further amended—

(1) by striking “of this subsection” after—

(A) “paragraph (1)” in subsections (a)(4)(A), (a)(5), (a)(6), and (c)(2); and

(B) “paragraph (5)” in subsection (a)(4)(B)(i); and

(2) by striking “of this paragraph” each place it appears in subsection (a)(4).

SEC. 405. ADJUSTMENT TO HOME LOAN FEES.

Effective date.

Effective January 1, 2004, paragraph (2) of section 3729(b) is amended to read as follows:

“(2) The loan fee table referred to in paragraph (1) is as follows:

“LOAN FEE TABLE

Type of loan	Active duty veteran	Reservist	Other obligor
(A)(i) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed before January 1, 2004)	2.00	2.75	NA
(A)(ii) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed on or after January 1, 2004, and before October 1, 2004)	2.20	2.40	NA
(A)(iii) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2004, and before October 1, 2011)	2.15	2.40	NA
(A)(iv) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2011)	1.40	1.65	NA
(B)(i) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed before January 1, 2004)	3.00	3.00	NA
(B)(ii) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after January 1, 2004, and before October 1, 2011)	3.30	3.30	NA

"LOAN FEE TABLE—Continued

Type of loan	Active duty veteran	Reservist	Other obligor
(B)(iii) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after October 1, 2011 and before October 1, 2013)	2.15	2.15	NA
(B)(iv) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after October 1, 2013)	1.25	1.25	NA
(C)(i) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 5-down (closed before October 1, 2011)	1.50	1.75	NA
(C)(ii) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 5-down (closed on or after October 1, 2011)	0.75	1.00	NA
(D)(i) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 10-down (closed before October 1, 2011)	1.25	1.50	NA
(D)(ii) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2011)	0.50	0.75	NA
(E) Interest rate reduction refinancing loan	0.50	0.50	NA
(F) Direct loan under section 3711	1.00	1.00	NA
(G) Manufactured home loan under section 3712 (other than an interest rate reduction refinancing loan)	1.00	1.00	NA
(H) Loan to Native American veteran under section 3762 (other than an interest rate reduction refinancing loan)	1.25	1.25	NA
(I) Loan assumption under section 3714	0.50	0.50	0.50
(J) Loan under section 3733(a)	2.25	2.25	2.25".

SEC. 406. ONE-YEAR EXTENSION OF PROCEDURES ON LIQUIDATION SALES OF DEFAULTED HOME LOANS GUARANTEED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Section 3732(c)(11) is amended by striking "October 1, 2011" and inserting "October 1, 2012".

TITLE V—BURIAL BENEFITS

SEC. 501. BURIAL PLOT ALLOWANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2303(b) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking "a burial allowance under such section 2302, or under such subsection, who was discharged from the active military, naval, or air service for a disability incurred or aggravated in line of duty, or who is a veteran of any war" and inserting "burial in a national cemetery under section 2402 of this title"; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking "(other than a veteran whose eligibility for benefits under this subsection is based

on being a veteran of any war)” and inserting “is eligible for a burial allowance under section 2302 of this title or under subsection (a) of this section, or was discharged from the active military, naval, or air service for a disability incurred or aggravated in line of duty, and such veteran”.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 2307 is amended in the last sentence by striking “and (b)” and inserting “and (b)(2)”.

SEC. 502. ELIGIBILITY OF SURVIVING SPOUSES WHO REMARRY FOR BURIAL IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES.

(a) ELIGIBILITY.—Section 2402(5) is amended by striking “(which for purposes of this chapter includes an unremarried surviving spouse who had a subsequent remarriage which was terminated by death or divorce)” and inserting “(which for purposes of this chapter includes a surviving spouse who had a subsequent remarriage)”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to deaths occurring on or after January 1, 2000.

Applicability.
38 USC 2402
note.

SEC. 503. PERMANENT AUTHORITY FOR STATE CEMETERY GRANTS PROGRAM.

(a) PERMANENT AUTHORITY.—Subsection (a) of section 2408 is amended—

- (1) by striking “(1)”; and
- (2) by striking paragraph (2).

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Subsection (e) of such section is amended by striking “Sums appropriated under subsection (a) of this section” and inserting “Amounts appropriated to carry out this section”.

(c) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT TO REPEAL OBSOLETE PROVISION.—Subsection (d)(1) of such section is amended by striking “on or after November 21, 1997,”.

TITLE VI—EXPOSURE TO HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

SEC. 601. RADIATION DOSE RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

38 USC 1154
note.

(a) REVIEW OF MISSION, PROCEDURES, AND ADMINISTRATION.—(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense shall jointly conduct a review of the mission, procedures, and administration of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program of the Department of Defense.

(2) In conducting the review under paragraph (1), the Secretaries shall—

(A) determine whether any additional actions are required to ensure that the quality assurance and quality control mechanisms of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program are adequate and sufficient for purposes of the program; and

(B) determine the actions that are required to ensure that the mechanisms of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program for communication and interaction with veterans are adequate and sufficient for purposes of the program, including mechanisms to permit veterans to review the assumptions utilized in their dose reconstructions.

Deadline.
Reports.

(3) Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretaries shall jointly submit to Congress a report on the review under paragraph (1). The report shall set forth—

(A) the results of the review;

(B) a plan for any actions determined to be required under paragraph (2); and

(C) such other recommendations for the improvement of the mission, procedures, and administration of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program as the Secretaries jointly consider appropriate.

(b) ON-GOING REVIEW AND OVERSIGHT.—The Secretaries shall jointly take appropriate actions to ensure the on-going independent review and oversight of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program, including the establishment of the advisory board required by subsection (c).

Establishment.

(c) ADVISORY BOARD.—(1) In taking actions under subsection (b), the Secretaries shall jointly appoint an advisory board to provide review and oversight of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program.

(2) The advisory board under paragraph (1) shall be composed of the following:

(A) At least one expert in historical dose reconstruction of the type conducted under the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program.

(B) At least one expert in radiation health matters.

(C) At least one expert in risk communications matters.

(D) A representative of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(E) A representative of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

(F) At least three veterans, including at least one veteran who is a member of an atomic veterans group.

(3) The advisory board under paragraph (1) shall—

(A) conduct periodic, random audits of dose reconstructions under the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program and of decisions by the Department of Veterans Affairs on claims for service connection of radiogenic diseases;

(B) assist the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency in communicating to veterans information on the mission, procedures, and evidentiary requirements of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program; and

(C) carry out such other activities with respect to the review and oversight of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program as the Secretaries shall jointly specify.

(4) The advisory board under paragraph (1) may make such recommendations on modifications in the mission or procedures of the Radiation Dose Reconstruction Program as the advisory board considers appropriate as a result of the audits conducted under paragraph (3)(A).

SEC. 602. STUDY ON DISPOSITION OF AIR FORCE HEALTH STUDY.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, in accordance with this section, carry out a study to determine the appropriate disposition of the Air Force Health Study, an epidemiologic study of Air Force personnel who were responsible for conducting aerial spray missions of herbicides during the Vietnam era.

(b) **STUDY THROUGH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.**—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall seek to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences, or another appropriate scientific organization, to carry out the study required by subsection (a). Deadline.

(c) **ELEMENTS.**—Under the study under subsection (a), the National Academy of Sciences, or other appropriate scientific organization, shall address the following:

(1) The scientific merit of retaining and maintaining the medical records, other study data, and laboratory specimens collected in the course of the Air Force Health Study after the currently-scheduled termination date of the study in 2006.

(2) Whether or not any obstacles exist to retaining and maintaining the medical records, other study data, and laboratory specimens referred to in paragraph (1), including privacy concerns.

(3) The advisability of providing independent oversight of the medical records, other study data, and laboratory specimens referred to in paragraph (1), and of any further study of such records, data, and specimens, and, if so, the mechanism for providing such oversight.

(4) The advisability of extending the Air Force Health Study, including the potential value and relevance of extending the study, the potential cost of extending the study, and the Federal or non-Federal entity best suited to continue the study if extended.

(5) The advisability of making the laboratory specimens of the Air Force Health Study available for independent research, including the potential value and relevance of such research, and the potential cost of such research.

(d) **REPORT.**—Not later than 120 days after entering into an agreement under subsection (b), the National Academy of Sciences, or other appropriate scientific organization, shall submit to the Secretary and Congress a report on the results of the study under subsection (a). The report shall include the results of the study, including the matters addressed under subsection (c), and such other recommendations as the Academy, or other appropriate scientific organization, considers appropriate as a result of the study. Deadline.

SEC. 603. FUNDING OF MEDICAL FOLLOW-UP AGENCY OF INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE OF NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES FOR EPIDEMIOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS.

(a) **FUNDING.**—(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense shall each make available to the National Academy of Sciences in each of fiscal years 2004 through 2013 the amount of \$250,000 for the Medical Follow-Up Agency of the Institute of Medicine of the Academy for purposes of epidemiological research on members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

(2) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make available amounts under paragraph (1) for a fiscal year from amounts available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for that fiscal year.

(3) The Secretary of Defense shall make available amounts under paragraph (1) for a fiscal year from amounts available for the Department of Defense for that fiscal year.

(b) **USE OF FUNDS.**—The Medical Follow-Up Agency shall use funds made available under subsection (a) for epidemiological research on members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

(c) **SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.**—Amounts made available to the Medical Follow-Up Agency under this section for a fiscal year for the purposes referred to in subsection (b) are in addition to any other amount made available to the Agency for that fiscal year for those purposes.

TITLE VII—OTHER MATTERS

SEC. 701. TIME LIMITATIONS ON RECEIPT OF CLAIM INFORMATION PURSUANT TO REQUESTS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) **INFORMATION TO COMPLETE CLAIMS APPLICATIONS.**—Section 5102 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(c) **TIME LIMITATION.**—(1) If information that a claimant and the claimant’s representative, if any, are notified under subsection (b) is necessary to complete an application is not received by the Secretary within one year from the date such notice is sent, no benefit may be paid or furnished by reason of the claimant’s application.

“(2) This subsection shall not apply to any application or claim for Government life insurance benefits.”.

(b) **CONSTRUCTION OF LIMITATION ON INFORMATION TO SUBSTANTIATE CLAIMS.**—Section 5103(b) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “if such” and all that follows through “application” and inserting “such information or evidence must be received by the Secretary within one year from the date such notice is sent”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3) Nothing in paragraph (1) shall be construed to prohibit the Secretary from making a decision on a claim before the expiration of the period referred to in that subsection.”.

(c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall take effect as if enacted on November 9, 2000, immediately after the enactment of the Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-475; 114 Stat. 2096).

(d) **PROCEDURES FOR READJUDICATION OF CERTAIN CLAIMS.**—

(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall readjudicate a claim of a qualified claimant if the request for such readjudication is received not later than the end of the one-year period that begins on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) For purposes of this subsection, a claimant is qualified within the meaning of paragraph (1) if the claimant—

(A) received notice under section 5103(a) of title 38, United States Code, requesting information or evidence to substantiate a claim;

(B) did not submit such information or evidence within a year after the date such notice was sent;

(C) did not file a timely appeal to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals or the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims; and

(D) submits such information or evidence during the one-year period referred to in paragraph (1).

38 USC 5102
note.

38 USC 5103
note.

(3) If the decision of the Secretary on a readjudication under this subsection is in favor of the qualified claimant, the award of the grant shall take effect as if the prior decision by the Secretary on the claim had not been made.

(4) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to establish a duty on the part of the Secretary to identify or readjudicate any claim that—

(A) is not submitted during the one-year period referred to in paragraph (1); or

(B) has been the subject of a timely appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals or the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

(e) CONSTRUCTION ON PROVIDING RENOTIFICATION.—Nothing in this section, or the amendments made by this section, shall be construed to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs—

(1) to provide notice under section 5103(a) of such title with respect to a claim insofar as the Secretary has previously provided such notice; or

(2) to provide for a special notice with respect to this section and the amendments made by this section.

SEC. 702. CLARIFICATION OF APPLICABILITY OF PROHIBITION ON ASSIGNMENT OF VETERANS BENEFITS TO AGREEMENTS REQUIRING PAYMENT OF FUTURE RECEIPT OF BENEFITS.

Section 5301(a) is amended—

(1) by inserting “(1)” after “(a)”;

(2) by designating the last sentence as paragraph (2); and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3)(A) This paragraph is intended to clarify that, in any case where a beneficiary entitled to compensation, pension, or dependency and indemnity compensation enters into an agreement with another person under which agreement such other person acquires for consideration the right to receive such benefit by payment of such compensation, pension, or dependency and indemnity compensation, as the case may be, except as provided in subparagraph (B), and including deposit into a joint account from which such other person may make withdrawals, or otherwise, such agreement shall be deemed to be an assignment and is prohibited.

“(B) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), nothing in this paragraph is intended to prohibit a loan involving a beneficiary under the terms of which the beneficiary may use the benefit to repay such other person as long as each of the periodic payments made to repay such other person is separately and voluntarily executed by the beneficiary or is made by preauthorized electronic funds transfer pursuant to the Electronic Funds Transfers Act (15 U.S.C. 1693 et seq.).

“(C) Any agreement or arrangement for collateral for security for an agreement that is prohibited under subparagraph (A) is also prohibited and is void from its inception.”.

SEC. 703. SIX-YEAR EXTENSION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MINORITY VETERANS.

Section 544(e) is amended by striking “December 31, 2003” and inserting “December 31, 2009”.

38 USC 5101
note.

SEC. 704. TEMPORARY AUTHORITY FOR PERFORMANCE OF MEDICAL DISABILITIES EXAMINATIONS BY CONTRACT PHYSICIANS.

(a) **AUTHORITY.**—Using appropriated funds, other than funds available for compensation and pension, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may provide for the conduct of examinations with respect to the medical disabilities of applicants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary by persons other than Department of Veterans Affairs employees. The authority under this section is in addition to the authority provided in section 504(b) of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-275; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note).

(b) **PERFORMANCE BY CONTRACT.**—Examinations under the authority provided in subsection (a) shall be conducted pursuant to contracts entered into and administered by the Under Secretary for Benefits.

(c) **EXPIRATION.**—The authority in subsection (a) shall expire on December 31, 2009. No examination may be carried out under the authority provided in that subsection after that date.

Deadline.

(d) **REPORT.**—Not later than four years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the use of the authority provided in subsection (a). The Secretary shall include in the report an assessment of the effect of examinations under that authority on the cost, timeliness, and thoroughness of examinations with respect to the medical disabilities of applicants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

SEC. 705. FORFEITURE OF BENEFITS FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES.

(a) **ADDITION OF CERTAIN OFFENSES.**—Paragraph (2) of section 6105(b) is amended—

(1) by inserting “175, 229,” after “sections”; and

(2) by inserting “831, 1091, 2332a, 2332b,” after “798”.

Applicability.
38 USC 6105
note.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply to claims filed after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 706. TWO-YEAR EXTENSION OF ROUND-DOWN REQUIREMENT FOR COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS.

Sections 1104(a) and 1303(a) are each amended by striking “2011” and inserting “2013”.

SEC. 707. CODIFICATION OF REQUIREMENT FOR EXPEDITIOUS TREATMENT OF CASES ON REMAND.

(a) **CASES REMANDED BY BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS.**—(1) Chapter 51 is amended by adding at the end of subchapter I the following new section:

“§ 5109B. Expedited treatment of remanded claims

“The Secretary shall take such actions as may be necessary to provide for the expeditious treatment by the appropriate regional office of the Veterans Benefits Administration of any claim that is remanded to a regional office of the Veterans Benefits Administration by the Board of Veterans' Appeals.”.

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 5109A the following new item:

“5109B. Expedited treatment of remanded claims.”

(b) **CASES REMANDED BY COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.**—(1) Chapter 71 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 7112. Expedited treatment of remanded claims

“The Secretary shall take such actions as may be necessary to provide for the expeditious treatment by the Board of any claim that is remanded to the Secretary by the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.”

(2) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“7112. Expedited treatment of remanded claims.”

(c) **REPEAL OF SOURCE SECTION.**—Section 302 of the Veterans’ Benefits Improvement Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-446; 108 Stat. 4658; 38 U.S.C. 5101 note) is repealed.

SEC. 708. TECHNICAL AND CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.

(a) **MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS.**—(1) Section 103(d) is amended—

(A) in paragraph (4)—

(i) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “this subsection” and inserting “paragraph (2)(A) or (3)”; and

(ii) in subparagraph (A), by striking “paragraph (2)” and inserting “paragraph (2)(A)”; and

(B) in paragraph (5), by striking “Paragraphs (2)” and inserting “Paragraphs (2)(A)”.

(2) Section 1729A is amended—

(A) in subsection (b), by striking “after June 30, 1997,” in the matter preceding paragraph (1);

(B) in subsection (c), by striking paragraph (3);

(C) by striking subsection (e); and

(D) by redesignating subsection (f) as subsection (e).

(3) Section 1804(c)(2) is amended by striking “subsection” and inserting “section”.

(4) Section 1974(a)(5) is amended by striking “Secretary of Transportation” and inserting “Secretary of Homeland Security”.

(b) **AMENDMENTS RELATING TO THE JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT.**—(1)(A) Subsection (c)(2)(B)(ii) of section 4102A is amended by striking “October 1, 2002” and inserting “October 1, 2003”.

(B) The amendment made by subparagraph (A) shall take effect as if included in the enactment of section 4(a) of the Jobs for Veterans Act (Public Law 107-288; 116 Stat. 2038). 38 USC 4102A.

(2) Subsection (f)(1) of section 4102A is amended by striking “6 months after the date of the enactment of this section,” and inserting “May 7, 2003.”

(c) **AMENDMENTS RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION AS AN INDEPENDENT AGENCY.**—(1) Section 1322 is amended—

(A) in subsection (a), by striking “Secretary of Health and Human Services” and all that follows through the period and

inserting “Commissioner of Social Security, and shall be certified by the Commissioner to the Secretary upon request of the Secretary.”; and

(B) in subsection (b)—

(i) by striking “Secretary of Health and Human Services” in the first sentence and inserting “Commissioner of Social Security”;

(ii) by striking “the two Secretaries” and inserting “the Secretary and the Commissioner”; and

(iii) by striking “Secretary of Health and Human Services” in the second sentence and inserting “Commissioner”.

(2) Section 5101(a) is amended by striking “Secretary of Health and Human Services” and inserting “Commissioner of Social Security”.

(3) Section 5317 is amended by striking “Secretary of Health and Human Services” in subsections (a), (b), and (g) and inserting “Commissioner of Social Security”.

(4)(A) Section 5318 is amended—

(i) in subsection (a), by striking “Department of Health and Human Services” and inserting “Social Security Administration”; and

(ii) in subsection (b)—

(I) by striking “Department of Health and Human Services” and inserting “Social Security Administration”;

(II) by striking “Secretary of Health and Human Services” the first place it appears and inserting “Commissioner of Social Security”;

(III) by striking “Secretary of Health and Human Services” the second place it appears and inserting “Commissioner”; and

(IV) by striking “such Secretaries” and inserting “the Secretary and the Commissioner”.

(B)(i) The heading of such section is amended to read as follows:

“§ 5318. Review of Social Security Administration death information”.

(ii) The item relating to that section in the table of sections at the beginning at chapter 53 is amended to read as follows:

“5318. Review of Social Security Administration death information.”.

Approved December 16, 2003.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 2297 (S. 1132):

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 108-211 (Comm. on Veterans' Affairs)

SENATE REPORTS: No. 108-169 accompanying S. 1132 (Comm. on Veterans' Affairs).

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Oct. 8, considered and passed House.

Nov. 19, considered and passed Senate, amended.

Nov. 20, House concurred in Senate amendment.

