



EMPOWER VETERANS WITH ACCESS TO QUALITY AND TIMELY HEALTH CARE

# Restore Rigorous VA Oversight & Accountability

**Those entrusted to care for our nation's veterans must meet the standards America expects of them. Congress can restore a culture of accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) through robust oversight to ensure the agency is fulfilling its mission.**

## THE ISSUE

The Department of Veterans Affairs has repeatedly failed to meet its obligations to care for veterans and be responsive to Congress, undermining trust in its important mission. In the face of widespread VA personnel and policy failures, Congress needs to change the agency's incentives. Protecting VA leaders and staff who do not take their responsibilities seriously or mismanage taxpayer resources harms our nation's veterans and demoralizes dedicated employees.

## POLICY SOLUTIONS

### RESTORE VA PERSONNEL ACCOUNTABILITY

Congress should restore the VA's ability to hold employees accountable for misconduct without undue delays. The VA previously had these tools but stopped enforcing them due to judicial and administrative rulings that gutted previous legislation. Improving VA personnel incentives need not come at the expense of due process and is direly needed.

### REQUIRE TRANSPARENT WAIT TIMES

To end the agency's widespread practice of using outdated, manipulation-prone wait time measurements, Congress should codify VA MISSION Act regulations measuring wait times from a veteran's date of request for an appointment to their date of treatment. Congress should require the VA to publicly report accurately measured wait times and appointment completion data at the national, VISN, and facility level as well.

### CONDUCT AN INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE VA

An agency requesting a \$441 billion budget should be able to answer basic questions about how much money it has, but the VA cannot. After the VA in 2024 asked for an emergency \$15 billion that it later admitted it did not need, all future congressional appropriations should be contingent on the agency submitting to an annual DOD-style external audit.<sup>1</sup>

### REVIEW VA STAFFING LEVELS

As the veteran population declines and more veterans seek treatment through community care, VA staffing levels should adjust to reflect changing demand for VHA care, as they did in the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Congress should not authorize additional VA FTEs for FY 2027 while there are over 42,000 existing VA vacancies.<sup>3</sup> Congress should commission an independent audit of VA staffing levels; Secretary Collins should use this report to further right-size VA headcounts in line with industry standards.

## CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT VIA POWER OF THE PURSE

The best way for Congress to restore an agency's accountability is by tying its funding to results. To ensure the VA is more transparent and responsive than in years past, Congress should create consequences for leadership failing to carry out legislation, such as funding penalties for the Office of the Secretary and freezes on performance bonuses for senior executives.

## MODERNIZE VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

The veterans' disability system has not had comprehensive overhaul since the 1940s, despite significant changes in rehabilitative treatment and our economy. Congress should form an independent VA disability reform commission, modeled after the 2016 Commission on Care.<sup>4</sup> Congress can hold an up-or-down vote on packaged recommendations requiring their approval.

## CONTACT

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Leo Shane III, "[Lawmakers accuse VA leaders of exaggerating budget shortfall](#)," Military Times, November 1, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Kizer and R. Adams Dudley, "[Extreme Makeover: Transformation of the Veterans Health Care System](#)," Annual Review of Public Health, Vol. 30, April 2009.

<sup>3</sup> [VA MISSION Act Section 505 Data, FY 2025 Quarter 2](#), Department of Veterans Affairs, July 1, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> "[Final Report of the Commission on Care](#)," June 30, 2016.