

HR 4766

To prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from paying bonuses to certain employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs until the backlog of disability claims is resolved, to establish a commission to evaluate such backlog, and for other purposes.

Congress: 113 (2013–2015, Ended)

Chamber: House

Policy Area: Armed Forces and National Security

Introduced: May 29, 2014

Current Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

Latest Action: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. (Jun 20, 2014)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4766>

Sponsor

Name: Rep. Gardner, Cory [R-CO-4]

Party: Republican • **State:** CO • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors (3 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Rep. Lamborn, Doug [R-CO-5]	R · CO		May 29, 2014
Rep. Lummis, Cynthia M. [R-WY-At Large]	R · WY		May 29, 2014
Rep. Tipton, Scott R. [R-CO-3]	R · CO		May 29, 2014

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Armed Services Committee	House	Referred to	Jun 20, 2014
Veterans' Affairs Committee	House	Referred to	Jun 16, 2014

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Armed Forces and National Security

Related Bills

No related bills are listed.

Prohibits the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from paying any Senior Executive Service employee an award or bonus until the Secretary certifies to Congress that the backlog of disability claims within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been resolved.

Establishes a commission or task force within the VA to: (1) study the backlog of veterans' disability compensation claims, including possible improvements to the claims process, and the anticipated increase in appeals of those claims, including possible improvements to the appeals process; (2) submit to the Secretary, the Chairman of the Board of Veteran's Appeals, and the Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Veterans Claims remedies and solutions to the backlog of such claims and appeals; and (3) submit initial, interim, and final reports to the President and Congress regarding its findings and recommendations. Requires the Secretary, Chairman, or Chief Judge to implement the remedies and solutions he or she deem appropriate.

Directs the Secretary to submit to Congress, within 60 days after this Act's enactment and every 120 days thereafter until May 25, 2015, a supplemental report on the VA's implementation of the Strategic Plan to Eliminate the Compensation Claims Backlog, including verification that during the period covered by the report each claim was approved or denied within 125 days with a 98% accuracy rate.

Directs the Secretary to enter into agreements to ensure that the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration and the Secretary of Defense (DOD) transfer to the VA, within 30 days of the Secretary's request, disability or medical records that the VA Secretary will use to evaluate a disability compensation claim. Requires the VA and Defense Secretaries to submit to Congress and implement a plan to reduce to 30 days the time needed to provide members of the National Guard and the Secretary with the medical records of Guard members.

Requires the VA Secretary to establish a two-year training program for newly-hired VA claims processors.

Directs the Comptroller General (GAO) to report to Congress on the Secretary's progress in improving the timeliness of claims processing and eliminating the claims backlog. Requires the report to include any recommendations the Comptroller General has to improve the Secretary's progress.

Directs the Secretary, in processing veterans' disability compensation claims, to provide priority to veterans:

- who have attained age 70;
- who are terminally ill;
- with life-threatening illnesses;
- who are homeless;
- who were awarded the Medal of Honor;
- who are former prisoners of war;
- whose claims are being re-reviewed in relation to a previously denied claim relating to military sexual trauma; and
- whom the Secretary determines, on a case-by-case basis, either are seriously or very seriously injured or should be given priority based on an application for good cause established by the Secretary.

Directs the Secretary to maintain on the VA's website publicly accessible information concerning pending and completed claims of compensation for a veteran's service-connected disability or death, including the number of claims pending and completed, and the average number of days between submission and completion, for certain periods. Requires the information provided to be updated at least every seven days.

Directs the Secretary to include in the VA's annual report to Congress on its activities and costs information on:

- the automatic processing of veterans disability compensation claims,
- the performance of any regional office that fails to meet its administrative goals regarding timeliness and accuracy in the processing of such claims, and
- the timeliness with which the Secretary receives information requested from other federal agencies that the Secretary requires in adjudicating claims for compensation regarding a veteran's service-connected disability or death.

Directs the Secretary to post notices of average times for the processing of veterans' disability compensation claims, as well as the percentage of claims approved, in a conspicuous place in each VA regional office and claims intake facility and on the VA's website. Requires the Secretary to notify each person submitting a claim of such information and of the person's eligibility to receive up to an extra year of benefit payments upon filing an original claim that is fully developed. Requires the notice information to be updated at least quarterly.

Actions Timeline

- **Jun 20, 2014:** Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.
- **Jun 16, 2014:** Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.
- **May 29, 2014:** Introduced in House
- **May 29, 2014:** Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.