

S 2248

Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018

Congress: 115 (2017–2019, Ended)

Chamber: Senate

Policy Area: Armed Forces and National Security

Introduced: Dec 19, 2017

Current Status: Became Public Law No: 115-407.

Latest Action: Became Public Law No: 115-407. (Dec 31, 2018)

Law: 115-407 (Enacted Dec 31, 2018)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2248>

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Tester, Jon [D-MT]

Party: Democratic • **State:** MT • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors (2 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Heller, Dean [R-NV]	R · NV		Dec 19, 2017
Sen. Udall, Tom [D-NM]	D · NM		Dec 19, 2017

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Veterans' Affairs Committee	Senate	Discharged From	Mar 1, 2018

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Armed Forces and National Security

Related Bills

Bill	Relationship	Last Action
115 HR 3657	Related bill	Nov 7, 2017: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018

This bill updates various Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and programs in areas including education, transition assistance, and civil relief.

The bill makes a number of changes to educational benefits. Among the changes, the bill adjusts assistance limits for veterans participating in a VA vocational rehabilitation program who are called to active reserve duty in certain instances. The bill also requires the VA to electronically provide documentation verifying the amount of their housing stipend to recipients of Post-9/11 educational assistance and requires the VA to disapprove courses of education at educational institutions that have certain payment policies in place.

Additionally, the bill requires the VA to make prompt payments of educational assistance funding and to provide information on whether a postsecondary education institution requires a covered individual to take certain actions to stay enrolled pending a receipt of educational assistance. Finally, the bill updates the basic housing allowance amounts for veterans enrolled in high technology programs pursuant to the VA pilot program.

The bill makes changes regarding memorial affairs for veterans, including requiring the VA to furnish, when requested, headstones or markers for the unmarked graves of any eligible individuals (including those whose remains are unavailable) buried in a veterans cemetery owned by a tribal organization or on land owned by or held in trust for a tribal organization.

The bill amends several sections of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, including to allow (1) a surviving spouse of a deceased servicemember who died while in military service to terminate a lease without penalty within one year of the servicemember's death; (2) the spouse of a servicemember to elect to use the same residence as the servicemember for the purposes of taxation and voting; and (3) a servicemember to terminate a commercial mobile, telephone exchange, internet access or programming service contract after the service member receives military orders to a location that does not support such contracts.

With regard to transition assistance, the bill requires the VA to identify and publish a list of community-based programs operated by nonprofit entities that provide transition assistance to members of the Armed Forces who are retired, separated, or discharged.

The bill addresses a variety of VA administrative issues. Specifically, the bill directs the VA to prohibit employees who have knowingly misused VA purchase cards from serving as purchase card holders or approving officials. The bill also requires the VA to make changes to its information technology systems so that changes to information about a person's dependent is reviewable and revisable by that person.

Under the bill, the VA must submit certain documents to Congress related to the Electronic Health Record Modernization Program. In addition, the VA must develop a standard letter to be provided to individuals who owe debts to the VA and to develop a method by which individuals can elect to receive such notice electronically.

The bill also makes several other changes to a variety of VA programs, projects, and benefits. Specifically, the bill authorizes specific major medical facility projects and requires VA medical facility directors to submit plans to improve facilities.

The bill expands eligibility for homeless veterans reintegration programs to other veterans, including include veterans who are transitioning from being incarcerated and others.

The VA must award contracts to multiple regional prime vendors instead of a single nationwide prime vendor for the Medical Surgical Prime Vendor program; and

Finally, the bill requires the VA to report on the feasibility and advisability of expanding access to dental care for eligible veterans.

Actions Timeline

- **Dec 31, 2018:** Signed by President.
- **Dec 31, 2018:** Became Public Law No: 115-407.
- **Dec 27, 2018:** Presented to President.
- **Dec 20, 2018:** Message on Senate action sent to the House.
- **Dec 19, 2018:** Resolving differences -- Senate actions: Senate agreed to the House amendment to S. 2248 by Unanimous Consent.(consideration: CR S7896)
- **Dec 19, 2018:** Senate agreed to the House amendment to S. 2248 by Unanimous Consent. (consideration: CR S7896)
- **Dec 11, 2018:** Message on House action received in Senate and at desk: House amendment to Senate bill.
- **Dec 10, 2018:** Mr. Roe (TN) moved to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.
- **Dec 10, 2018:** Considered under suspension of the rules. (consideration: CR H9794-9802)
- **Dec 10, 2018:** DEBATE - The House proceeded with forty minutes of debate on S. 2248.
- **Dec 10, 2018:** Passed/agreed to in House: On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by voice vote.(text: CR H9794-9798)
- **Dec 10, 2018:** On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by voice vote. (text: CR H9794-9798)
- **Dec 10, 2018:** Motion to reconsider laid on the table Agreed to without objection.
- **Mar 5, 2018:** Message on Senate action sent to the House.
- **Mar 5, 2018:** Received in the House.
- **Mar 5, 2018:** Held at the desk.
- **Mar 1, 2018:** Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs discharged by Unanimous Consent.(consideration: CR S1321)
- **Mar 1, 2018:** Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs discharged by Unanimous Consent. (consideration: CR S1321)
- **Mar 1, 2018:** Passed/agreed to in Senate: Passed Senate without amendment by Unanimous Consent.(text: CR S1321)
- **Mar 1, 2018:** Passed Senate without amendment by Unanimous Consent. (text: CR S1321)
- **Dec 19, 2017:** Introduced in Senate
- **Dec 19, 2017:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.