

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 19, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

We write today to express our disappointment with the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) lack of transparency and communication with Congress regarding VA's implementation of Public Law 118-210, the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (the Dole Act). Following repeated requests from all four corners of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, VA scheduled a long-awaited briefing on May 9, 2025. VA made a commitment to provide updates on *all* sections of the Dole Act pertaining to VA. Instead, the Department provided only one slide of substantive implementation updates for this 97-page bill.

This briefing was further evidence that transparency with Congress from your Department has fractured significantly under your leadership. Our veterans deserve better than a VA unwilling to share information with the members of Congress who represent them, particularly regarding legislation that veterans have been demanding for years.

As further evidence of the Department's intentional obscurity, at the beginning of the call, VA's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs confirmed to our staff that there were no subject matter experts on the call able to answer specific questions regarding implementation of Title I of the law – which contains thirty-five health care-related sections that VA is tasked with implementing – and that the Department had no plans for a future call to review this Title. The Department did not even bother to provide subject matter experts for the sections VA was prepared to discuss during the briefing. VA professional staff present at this briefing provided their best effort despite obfuscation and delay from your senior political staff, yet the call proved futile. Congress has yet to be briefed on sections which, if not implemented soon, will be devastating to veterans. This includes vital sections such as the expansion of home and community-based care for veterans with ALS or spinal cord injuries, raising the Grant and Per Diem rate for homeless veterans, and more.

Additionally, today VA announced it will be implementing Section 101 of the Dole Act – which requires VA to implement the “best medical interest” eligibility criterion of the VA MISSION Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-182) in accordance with the Department's existing implementing regulations, under section 17.4010(a)(5) of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations. Today, the Department is making much ado of an announcement to follow existing law, while failing to implement dozens of other meaningful policy changes made throughout the rest of the Dole Act.

As a former member of the House of Representatives, you cannot claim to be ignorant of the importance of Congress' oversight function, and how this function is impeded when the Administration does not provide Congress with substantive information it has promised. It is Congress' obligation to not only pass legislation, including legislation explicitly requested by the Department, but also to oversee proper implementation of that legislation. Providing in-depth implementation briefings to Congress regarding the laws passed by this body have been standard practice under numerous Administrations – including for Public Law 117-168, the Honoring our PACT Act of 2022; Public Law 115-182, the VA MISSION Act of 2018; and Public Law 115-41, the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, among many others. As part of VA's substantive response to this letter, we request the Department provide our offices with:

1. An in-depth briefing, with relevant subject matter experts present, on each section of the Dole Act, no later than May 30, 2025;
2. A commitment to monthly briefings regarding implementation, starting June 2025; and
3. A detailed written update on plans for implementation of each section of the Dole Act, including any anticipated challenges with implementation and a goal date for full implementation.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs



Mark Takano
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs