



UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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The Veterans First Act: Increasing Accountability at the VA Bipartisan bill protects whistleblowers, makes it easier to discipline bad actors

When the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) cannot hold bad actors accountable, everyone loses. Taxpayer dollars are wasted on employees who are not fully committed to helping our veterans. Other employees at the VA suffer because they are forced to work alongside or take direction from people who aren't doing their jobs. Worst of all, our veterans suffer when the people responsible for caring for them are putting themselves first – not our veterans. The *Veterans First Act* will give the VA the tools it needs to hold bad actors accountable.

Protects Whistleblowers:

- Creates the **Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection** at the VA with a Senate-confirmed director, **giving Congress more oversight over accountability.**
- Requires the VA to evaluate supervisors based on the **protection of whistleblowers.**
- Requires the VA to provide Department-wide **training regarding whistleblower complaints** once a year.
- Requires the VA to provide travel expenses for whistleblowers testifying before Congress.

Makes it easier for VA to hire and remove senior executives:

- Gives the VA Secretary **additional flexibility** in hiring and firing senior executives.
- **Removes the MSPB** from the senior executive accountability process, requiring senior executives to appeal to the VA secretary under an expedited timeline.
- **Reduces benefits for senior executives** who have committed certain crimes.
- Requires the VA to conduct an **outside review of management training** for senior executives at the VA and conduct an **annual performance plan** for each political employee.

Increases accountability for all employees at the VA:

- Grants the VA Secretary **the authority to expedite the removal of employees** at VA based on performance or misconduct.
- **Shortens the removal and disciplinary appeal process** for all employees at the VA and prohibits the VA from paying an individual appealing a removal from the VA.
- Places **limits on the amount of time employees can be placed on paid administrative leave** while being investigated.
- Helps ensure that probationary employees do not obtain permanent jobs unless they have demonstrated successful performance.
- Incentivizes managers to **address poor performance and misconduct** among employees by requiring the VA secretary to include this as part of the annual performance plan.
- **Prohibits bonuses** for employees who have been found guilty of wrongdoing.