



# UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

JOHNNY ISAKSON | CHAIRMAN

## Senate Accomplishments for Veterans in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress

In 2017-2018, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

- ✓ **Held 30 hearings**, including **five oversight hearings** on the State of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the *VA MISSION Act* implementation, Veterans Choice Program, the Veterans Health Administration's inclusion on the U.S. Government Accountability Office's "High Risk List," and veteran suicide prevention.
- ✓ **Held 10 joint hearings** with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to hear from veterans service organizations.
- ✓ **Sent 17 of President Trump's nominees** for various positions at the VA, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and the Department of Labor to the full Senate. The Senate has confirmed 16 of those nominees.
- ✓ Considered **75 pieces of legislation**.
- ✓ In addition, the Senate has also passed nine VA facility naming bills, all of which have been signed into law.

In the Senate, we have:

- ✓ **Passed 25 pieces of major veterans legislation, which have all been signed into law:**
  1. **The *Veterans Choice Program Improvement Act*** (S.544), to extend the Veterans Choice Program and ensure veterans have access to timely care in their own communities, signed into law on April 19, 2017 (Public Law 115-26).
  2. **The *Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act*** (S.1094), to improve accountability at the VA and protect the rights of whistleblowers, signed into law on June 23, 2017 (Public Law 115-41).
  3. **The *VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017*** (S.114), to authorize and appropriate funding for the VA to continue the Veterans Choice Program and strengthen VA care, signed into law on Aug. 12, 2017 (Public Law 115-46).

4. **The *Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017*** (H.R.3218), to improve veterans' education benefits and enhance the post-9/11 G.I. Bill, signed into law Aug. 16, 2017 (Public Law 115-48).
5. **The *Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017*** (H.R.2288), to modernize the woefully outdated benefits claims appeals process at the VA, signed into law on Aug. 23, 2017 (Public Law 115-55).
6. **The *Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2017*** (H.R.3819), to ensure veterans continue to have access to critical programs at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), signed into law Sept. 29, 2017 (Public Law 115-62).
7. **The *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2017*** (H.R.1329), to increase veterans' disability benefits based on rising costs of living, signed into law Nov. 2, 2017 (Public Law 115-75).
8. **The *VA Prescription Data Accountability Act*** (H.R.1545), to allow the VA to securely share data with state prescription drug monitoring programs for patients who are prescribed opioids by VA providers, including both veterans and their dependents, signed into law Nov. 21, 2017 (Public Law 115-86).
9. **The *Veterans Apprenticeship and Labor Opportunity Reform (VALOR) Act*** (H.R.3949), to streamline the certification process for non-federal apprenticeship training programs for veterans, signed into law Nov. 21, 2017 (Public Law 115-89).
10. **The *Enhancing Veteran Care Act*** (S.1266), to allow the VA to contract with outside organizations for investigations into VA medical centers, signed into law Dec. 20, 2017 (Public Law 115-95).
11. **The *Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act of 2017*** (H.R.1725), to require the VA to evaluate an initiative to reduce the need for in-person disability examinations, signed into law March 9, 2018 (Public Law 115-130).
12. **The *Veterans Care Financial Protection Act of 2017*** (H.R.3122), to require the VA to include a warning on its website to veterans relating to dishonest, predatory, or otherwise unlawful practices targeting individuals who are eligible for increased pension on the basis of need for regular aid and attendance, signed into law March 9, 2018 (Public Law 115-131).
13. **H.R.3656**, to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide VA memorial headstones and markers for veterans whose remains are unavailable, signed into law March 16, 2018 (Public Law 115-136).

14. **The *State Veterans Home Adult Day Health Care Improvement Act of 2017*** (S.324), to direct the VA to enter into an agreement with each state home to pay for medical supervision model adult day health care for a veteran for whom the home is not receiving VA nursing home care payments, signed into law March 27, 2018 (Public Law 115-159).
15. **H.R.3562**, to improve the provision of in-home adaptations for veterans with service-connected disabilities in VA's vocational rehabilitation and employment program, signed into law June 1, 2018 (Public Law 115-177).
16. **The *John S. McCain III, Daniel K. Akaka and Samuel R. Johnson VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act*** (S.2372), to strengthen healthcare services at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) while streamlining the department's community care programs to ensure veterans receive efficient, timely and quality care, whether inside the VA system or from providers in their communities, signed into law June 6, 2018 (Public Law 115-182).
17. **The *Veterans Cemetery Benefit Correction Act*** (H.R.4910), to require the U.S. Department of the Interior to provide grave liners for veterans buried in cemeteries under the control of the National Park Service, signed into law June 15, 2018 (Public Law 115-184).
18. **The *VA Senior Executive Accountability (SEA) Act*** (H.R.2772), to prohibit an individual employed in a senior executive position at the VA from being reassigned to another such position unless such reassignment is approved by the VA secretary, signed into law June 21, 2018 (Public Law 115-188).
19. **The *Veterans Providing Healthcare Transition Improvement Act*** (S.899), to provide leave for medical treatment for certain new federal employees who are veterans with service-connected disabilities, signed into law Sept.7, 2018 (Public Law 115-238).
20. **The *Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018*** (H.R.2147), to require VA to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to serve as part of a justice team in a veterans treatment court or other veteran-focused court, signed into law Sept. 17, 2018 (Public Law 115-240)
21. **The *Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2018*** (S.3479), to ensure veterans continue to have access to critical programs at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), signed into law Sept. 29, 2018 (Public Law 115-251).

22. **The Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2018** (H.R.4958), to increase veterans' disability benefits based on rising costs of living, signed into law Oct. 10, 2018 (Public Law 115-258).
23. **The No Hero Left Untreated Act** (H.R.1162), to require the VA to carry out a one-year pilot program to provide access to certain therapies to treat veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, chronic pain, or opiate addiction, signed into law Dec. 21, 2018 (Public Law 115-339).
24. **The Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018**, (S.2248), to improve veterans' education and burial benefits, prevent veteran homelessness, and improve the transition process for veterans and their families, among other provisions, signed into law Dec. 31, 2018 (Public Law 115-407).
25. **The Forever GI Bill Housing Payment Act** (S.3777), to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a tiger team dedicated to addressing the difficulties encountered by the VA in carrying out sections of the Forever G.I. Bill, signed into law Jan. 3, 2019 (Public Law 115-422).

✓ **Confirmed 16 nominees:**

- The Senate has **approved 16** of President Trump's nominees to serve in various roles at the VA and the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims:
  1. **David J. Shulkin, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, confirmed 100-0 by roll call vote, Feb. 13, 2017.**
  2. Thomas G. Bowman, Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary, confirmed by unanimous consent, Aug. 3, 2017.
  3. Brooks D. Tucker, Department of Veterans Affairs Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, confirmed by unanimous consent, Aug. 3, 2017.
  4. James M. Byrne, Department of Veterans Affairs General Counsel, confirmed by unanimous consent, Aug. 3, 2017.
  5. Judge Michael P. Allen, U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, confirmed by unanimous consent, Aug. 3, 2017.
  6. Judge Amanda L. Meredith, U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, confirmed by unanimous consent, Aug. 3, 2017.
  7. Judge Joseph L. Toth, U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, confirmed by unanimous consent, Aug. 3, 2017.
  8. Melissa Sue Glynn, Department of Veterans Affairs Assistant Secretary for Enterprise Integration, confirmed by unanimous consent, Nov. 8, 2017.

9. Cheryl L. Mason, Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals, confirmed by unanimous consent, Nov. 8, 2017.
10. Randy Reeves, Department of Veterans Affairs Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs, confirmed by unanimous consent, Nov. 8, 2017.
11. Jon J. Rychalski, Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Financial Officer, confirmed by unanimous consent, Dec. 21, 2017.
12. Paul Lawrence, Department of Veterans Affairs Undersecretary for Benefits, confirmed by voice vote, April 26, 2018.
13. Joseph Falvey, Jr., U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, confirmed by voice vote, April 26, 2018.
- 14. Robert Wilkie, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, confirmed 86-9 by roll call vote, July 23, 2018.**
15. James Gfrerer, Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology, confirmed by unanimous consent, Jan. 2, 2019.
16. Tamara Bonzanto, Department of Veterans Affairs Assistant Secretary for Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, confirmed by unanimous consent, Jan. 2, 2019.