

# **PUTTING VETERANS FIRST ACT OF 2025**

## **SECTION-BY-SECTION SUMMARY**

### ***Section 1: Short Title; Table of Contents.***

- Establishes the bill's title as "Putting Veterans First Act of 2025".

### ***Section 2: Definitions.***

#### **TITLE I – PUTTING VETERAN AND MILITARY FAMILIES FIRST**

### ***Section 101. Reinstatement of veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard and Reserves who have dedicated their lives to civil service.***

- Reinstates veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard or Reserves who were federal employees until they were illegally fired, demoted, or suspended between January 20, 2025 and the enactment of this act with full backpay and benefits.

### ***Section 102. Protections for veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard and Reserves who have dedicated their lives to civil service.***

- Protects veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard and Reserves who are civil servants by—
  - prohibiting their inclusion in mass terminations or layoffs;
  - requiring their supervisors to be notified no less than 10 days in advance of their termination;
  - requiring proof of poor performance before firing, demoting, or suspending them on the basis of poor performance; and
  - preventing them from being fired, demoted, or suspended if it would cause a greater than 50% vacancy rate in their office.
- Additionally, this would require immediate referral of any firing, demotion, or suspension of veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, or members of the Guard or Reserves to the Merit Systems Protection Board or Office of Special Counsel.

### ***Section 103. Report on members of the Military Community in the civil service.***

- Requires reporting to Congress regarding the number of veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard or Reserves who are public servants, including data on hiring, transferring, demoting, and firing.

### ***Section 104. Comptroller General report on Military Community employment.***

- Requires reporting to Congress regarding the number of veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard or Reserves who are public servants, including data on hiring, transferring, demoting, and firing.

#### **TITLE II – DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES**

##### ***SUBTITLE A – Protections***

### ***Section 201. Limitations on hiring freezes at VA.***

- Prevents the Department of Veterans Affairs from instituting a hiring freeze if it would result in increased costs to the Department or reductions in benefits or care to veterans, and requires the Secretary to submit cost-impact a report to Congress no less than 90 days before instituting such a freeze.

***Section 202. Limitations on closing offices at VA.***

- Prevents the Department from closing, removing, or realigning offices or programs at VA unless explicitly authorized by law.
- Requires the Secretary to notify Congress of a planned closing, removal, or realignment of an office or program no less than one year in advance.
- Requires the Secretary to make every effort to find alternative employment within the Department for any employee displaced by such a closure, removal, or realigning of an office or program.

***Section 203. Limitations on changes to telework and remote work at VA.***

- Requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to notify Congress, labor organizations representing Department employees, and impacted employees a year in advance of any changes to telework or remote work policies at VA.

***Section 204. Limitations on changes to final job offers at VA.***

- Prevents the Department of Veterans Affairs from rescinding or making changes to final offers of employment for any reason that is not directly related to an action or quality of the individual to whom the offer was made. Any violation of this will be eligible for appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

***SUBTITLE B – Reporting***

***Section 205. Notice and justification required before reduction in force at VA.***

- Requires VA to certify to Congress that for each removal of an employee or position from the Department under Reduction in Force efforts, this move will not impact delivery of care or benefits of veterans.

***Section 206. VA personnel reporting.***

- Improves existing staffing reports published by VA each quarter to include data on each position within the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA), and other offices within the Department. It currently only covers VHA positions.

***Section 207. VA research personnel reporting.***

- Requires VA to report to Congress regarding the number of VA research personnel who were terminated or had their period of employment reduced since January 20, 2025 and the research projects they were involved with.

***Section 208. Prohibiting multiple roles for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.***

- Prohibits any Secretary of Veterans Affairs or Acting Secretary from heading any other agency, board, or office of the federal government.

***Section 209. Prohibiting multiple roles for the Special Counsel.***

- Prohibits any Special Counsel or acting Special Counsel from heading any other agency, board, or office of the federal government.

***Section 210. Prohibiting multiple roles for the Director of the Office of Government Ethics.***

- Prohibits any Director of the Office of Government Ethics from heading any other agency, board, or office of the federal government.

### ***SUBTITLE C – Restoring Accountability and Services***

#### ***Section 211. Report on impacts of removing essential programs, offices, and services from VA.***

- Requires VA to report to Congress changes to the Department since January 20, 2025. This includes:
  - Offices and programs that were changed or closed.
  - Employees and positions changed or terminated.
  - Public digital or print media, including webpages and brochures, removed.
  - Changes to accessibility of VA’s website and facilities.
  - Research projects cancelled or postponed.
  - Employee-facing media and trainings removed.
  - Events cancelled or postponed.

#### ***Section 212. Restoring VA programs, offices, and services impacted since the beginning of the second Trump Administration.***

- Reinstates all positions and employees at the Department who were removed, demoted, or suspended since January 20, 2025. All such individuals shall receive backpay and benefits.
- Restores all media, including websites and brochures, previously removed.
- Resumes all research projects.
- Reverses the Secretary’s directive regarding limitations on the display of flags at the Department.

## **TITLE III – PROTECTIONS FOR CIVIL SERVANTS**

#### ***Section 301. Nominations to the Merit Systems Protection Board.***

- Requires the President to nominate a replacement for any vacancy at the Merit Systems Protection Board within thirty days of that vacancy.

#### ***Section 302. Modifications to appeal rights for probationary employees.***

- Expands protections for probationary employees by improving their eligibility to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

#### ***Section 303. Protections for civil servants who accept deferred resignation offers.***

- Allows any employee who accepts a contract for deferred resignation offer to rescind or nullify, without penalty, that contract up until their last day of employment.

#### ***Section 304. Protections for competitive service.***

- Prevents agencies from shifting, changing, or removing a position from a competitive service category to an excepted service category unless the current employee in that position agrees to this move or that position is vacant or such a move is made two years after the leader of that agency has notified Congress and any employee occupying that position.

## **TITLE IV – MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR CIVIL SERVANTS**

#### ***Section 401. Mental Health Services for Former Civil Servants***

- Requires each agency to cover the costs of mental health care for any veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard or Reserves they fire, demote, or suspend for the three months following such an action.

***Section 402. Mental Health Services for Current Civil Servants***

- Requires each agency to maintain funds, contracts, staff, and programming related to mental health counseling services, financial and legal services, dependent care services, workplace conflict resolution services, cultural competency services, substance use treatment services, crisis intervention services, or employee assistance programs at the level they were as of January 5, 2025.
- Requires these services to be made available as appropriate to former civil servants for three months following any firing, demotion, or suspension from civil service.

**TITLE V – EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR CIVIL SERVANTS**

***Section 501. Executive Branch Employment Assistance for Former Civil Servants in the Military Community***

- Requires the President to order measures to provide employment assistance and opportunities for veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard and Reserves who are fired, demoted, or suspended from civil service beginning on January 20, 2025.

***Section 502. Office of Personnel Management and the Department of Labor work on employment opportunities for members of the Military Community.***

- Requires the Director of the Office of Personnel Management and the Secretary of Labor to:
  - Collaborate with heads of other agencies to utilize federal programs, hiring and training opportunities, and retention incentives for veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard and Reserves.
  - Develop partnerships in the private sector to enhance employment opportunities for veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard and Reserves, including job portability.
  - Work to incorporate hiring preferences for qualified veterans, military spouses, survivors, veteran caregivers, and members of the Guard and Reserves into federal contracts.

**TITLE VI – DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY**

***Section 601. Limitation on access to veteran and VA systems and data.***

- Prohibits Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) from accessing or altering any veteran or VA data, including health records, contracts, and financial data without meeting typical, appropriate qualifications and passing background and security checks.
- Requires deletion of data and severing of digital connections to data obtained in violation of the above requirement.

***Section 602. Limitation of DOGE policies at VA.***

- Prohibits any policies related to DOGE, including from harming veterans and their families served by VA.

***Section 603. Report on Compliance for provisions in section 601.***

- Requires a report by VA and a subsequent review and report by the Office of Inspector General on VA's compliance with Section 601.

## **TITLE VII – FINANCIAL NEEDS OF VA**

### ***Section 701. Rule of Construction.***

- Defines mass contract and rule of construction for the purposes of this title.

### ***Section 702. Financial impact of DOGE on VA.***

- Requires VA to report to Congress quarterly on costs associated with policy changes prompted by the Department of Government Efficiency and the Trump Administration, such as cancelling contracts, wrongfully terminating employees, and closing offices of the Department.

### ***Section 703. Pause and review of cancelled VA contracts.***

- Requires a pause on efforts to cut and cancel VA contracts pending a full review and report to Congress on contracts that were cancelled, which ones VA plans to restore, and overall impact to veterans' care and benefits.

### ***Section 704. Limitations on future mass contract cancellation.***

- Requires a VA to notify Congress before conducting a mass contract cancellation.

### ***Section 705. Purchase cards.***

- Requires VA to notify Congress sixty days in advance of any changes to the Department's charge card programs with information on justification for the change, timeline for implementation, and monitoring of unintended negative impacts. These cards are used for gas to drive veterans to medical appointments, for purchasing health care devices and prosthetics, and medical supplies.

## **TITLE VIII – REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

### ***Section 801. Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Reporting.***

- Requires VBA to publish a weekly report on VA's website regarding the current VBA workload including totals for pending and backlogged compensation, pension, and education claims.

### ***Section 802. Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) Reporting.***

- Requires periodic reporting on appeals processing by BVA.

### ***Section 803. VA community care wait times reporting.***

- Requires VA to publish wait times for private sector care (community care) on its website similarly to its reporting on wait times for various types of care at VA.

### ***Section 804. VA transparency and Congressional oversight.***

- Requires VA to answer questions from Congress within reasonable time limits to prevent infringing on Congress' oversight authorities.