

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1509

To direct the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to post at certain locations the average national wait times for veterans to receive an appointment for health care at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 10, 2017

Mr. O'ROURKE (for himself, Mr. JONES, and Mr. KNIGHT) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to post at certain locations the average national wait times for veterans to receive an appointment for health care at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Better Informing Vet-
5 erans’ Healthcare Decisions Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. POSTING OF AVERAGE NATIONAL WAIT TIMES FOR**
2 **HEALTH CARE APPOINTMENTS AND AVER-**
3 **AGE PROCESSING TIMES OF DISABILITY COM-**
4 **PENSATION CLAIMS AND APPEALS.**

5 (a) FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS.—

6 (1) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

7 (A) According to the Suicide Data Report,
8 2012, of the Department of Veterans Affairs,
9 22 veterans commit suicide every day.

10 (B) According to estimates of the Depart-
11 ment, only approximately five of these 22 vet-
12 erans are enrolled in the mental health care
13 system of the Department.

14 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
15 Congress that—

16 (A) the Department of Veterans Affairs
17 must be more urgent and effective in its ap-
18 proach to addressing veteran suicide and pro-
19 viding veterans access to mental health care;
20 and

21 (B) Congress urges the Department to en-
22 sure that preventing veteran suicide and pro-
23 viding veterans access to mental health care is
24 the top reform priority of the Department.

25 (b) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—Not later than 30
26 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and on

1 a monthly basis thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Af-
2 fairs shall—

3 (1) determine, with respect to the one-year pe-
4 riod before the date of the determination—

5 (A) the average national wait times (in
6 days) for a veteran enrolled in the health care
7 system established under section 1705(a) of
8 title 38, United States Code—

9 (i) to receive an appointment for men-
10 tal health care at a medical facility of the
11 Department of Veterans Affairs; and

12 (ii) to receive an appointment for pri-
13 mary health care at such a facility;

14 (B) the average claims processing time of
15 the Secretary with respect to claims for dis-
16 ability compensation under chapter 11 of such
17 title 38; and

18 (C) the average appeals processing time of
19 the Secretary to decide an appeal to such a
20 claim for disability compensation; and

21 (2) provide the Secretary of Defense with such
22 information determined under paragraph (1).

23 (c) POSTING OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary of
24 Defense shall place in a conspicuous location at each ca-

1 reer counselor or career assistance advisor office a sign
2 that—

3 (1) is not less than 18 inches tall by 24 inches
4 wide; and

5 (2) is continuously updated to display the most
6 current information received by the Secretary pursu-
7 ant to subsection (b)(2).

8 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 (1) The term “appeals processing time” means,
10 with respect to a veteran filing an appeal to a deci-
11 sion of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs denying a
12 claim for disability compensation under chapter 11
13 of title 38, United States Code, the period beginning
14 on the date on which the claimant files a notice of
15 disagreement and ending on the date on which the
16 claimant is informed of the decision to such notice
17 of disagreement.

18 (2) The term “claims processing time” means,
19 with respect to a veteran filing a claim for disability
20 compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United
21 States Code, the period beginning on the date on
22 which the claim is originally received by the Sec-
23 retary of Veterans Affairs and ending on the date on
24 which the Secretary informs the claimant of the de-
25 cision.

1 (3) The term “wait time” means, with respect
2 to a veteran receiving an appointment for health
3 care at a medical facility of the Department of Vet-
4 erans Affairs, the period beginning on the date on
5 which the veteran first requests such appointment
6 and ending on the date on which such appointment
7 occurs.

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