

Section-by-Section of the “Veteran Benefits Enhancement and Expansion Act of 2020”

TITLE I – EDUCATION MATTERS

Sec. 101. – This section would expand eligibility for Fry Scholarship to children of certain deceased members of the Armed Forces.

Sec. 102. – This section would change the period for election to receive benefits under All-Volunteer Educational Assistance Program from initially entering active duty to a 90 day period following 180 days after the date on which the individual initially enters initial training.

Sec. 103. – This section would phase out the All-Volunteer Educational Assistance Program (Montgomery GI Bill) beginning in 2030.

Sec. 104. – This section would direct the Secretary of the Department of Veteran Affairs (SECVA) to make publically available on the Department of Veterans’ Affairs website a database explaining any public institution’s requirements for in-state tuition. This section would also allow the Secretary to disapprove any institution that does not provide the secretary certain information on in-state tuition requirements.

Sec. 105. – This section would expand authority for qualifying work study activities of the Department’s educational assistance programs to include outreach services provided through congressional offices.

TITLE II – BURIAL MATTERS

Sec. 201. – This section would expand paying for the transportation of deceased veteran remains to only national cemeteries to also include covered veteran’s cemeteries in which a deceased veteran is eligible to be buried and for which SECVA has made a grant to under Sec. 2408 of Title 38.

Sec. 202. — This section would increase certain funeral benefits administered by the Department by grouping all veterans who die of a non-service-connected disability into one category of burial benefits that is indexed to inflation, regardless of location of death

Sec. 203. — This section would extend the Department’s requirements for outer burial receptacles to cemeteries that are subject of certain grants made by SECVA.

Sec. 204. – This section would authorize VA to replace existing VA-furnished headstones to add inscriptions for deceased spouses and eligible dependent children, and allow for inscriptions on headstones furnished by VA if the spouse or eligible dependent child predeceases the veteran.

TITLE III – REPRESENTATION AND FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION MATTERS

Sec. 301. – Short title of Title III to read as the “Financial Refuge for Every Elderly Veteran Act of 2020” or the “FREE Veteran Act of 2020.”

Sec. 302. – This section would institute penalties for representing veterans as agents and attorneys without recognition by SECVA.

Sec. 303. – This section would direct SECVA to develop a plan to assess and address financial exploitation of Veterans and submit such a plan to Congress not later than one year after enactment.

Sec. 304. – This section would direct SECVA to update guidance and training for processors of claims of for pensions as is necessary but at least once every three years, and direct the development of a method for identifying and tracking the numbers of individuals who have received overpayments of pension under Chapter 15, Title 38 USC. This section would also require an annual report for each fiscal year after enactment.

Sec. 305. – This section would direct the Under Secretary of Benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs (USB for Benefits) to conduct an evaluation of the feasibility and advisability of requiring pension claims processors to take additional action as to verify that the direct deposit information is correct and to identify such legislative or administrative actions to ensure that payments of pension are provided to the correct recipients. This section would require a report on the USB for Benefits findings no later than 240 days after enactment.

Sec. 306. – This section would require that SECVA submit a report to Senate and House Veterans’ Affairs Committees, not less frequently than once each year, on efforts to address the financial exploitation of individuals receiving pension under Chapter 15, Title 38 USC.

Sec. 307. – This section would direct the USB for Benefits to ensure every paper or electronic document relating the receipt of pension under Chapter 15, Title 38 USC, that is available for individuals to apply for such pension, includes a notice that the Department does not charge any fee in connection with the filing of an application for such pension.

Sec. 308. – This section would require the USB for Benefits to develop an outreach plan for educating vulnerable individuals about potential financial exploitation relating to receipt of pension under Chapter 15, Title 38 USC. This section would also require a report not later than 180 days after enactment.

TITLE IV – OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 401. — This section would expand eligibility for the VA Home Loan Guaranty Program to members of the National Guard and Reserve by crediting service under Title 32 orders toward Home Loan Guaranty eligibility.

Sec. 402. — This section would extend certain home loan fees through 2030.

Sec. 403. — This section would clarify licensure requirements for contractor medical professionals to perform medical disability examinations for the Department.

Sec. 404. — This section would increase Medal of Honor special pension for surviving spouses from \$1,000 to \$1,388.68, and establish eligibility requirements for the Medal of Honor special pension.

Sec. 405. — This section would modernize the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program and provide veterans with assurance that their families will be taken care of financially after their death by raising the maximum coverage to \$40,000. This section would also guarantee that veterans cannot be denied SDVI coverage for any pre-existing health condition or for a service connected disability and remove the two-year time limit to apply. Veterans insured under the current SDVI program would have two years to opt-in to the modernized program, if they choose to do so.

Sec. 406. — This section would require the Secretary to continue providing the disability benefits questionnaire (DBQ) online. This section would also require the Secretary to assess and provide a report to Congress, within 180 days of enactment, whether an alternate process to the DBQ would be better and would still allow the Department to weight medical evidence equally whether it is provided by a Department or non-Department provider. Following a year or providing the report to Congress, the Secretary would be required to implement such process.

Sec. 407. — Determination of budgetary effects.