

[DISCUSSION DRAFT]

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

M____. _____ introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees 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; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 **[(a) SHORT TITLE.—**This Act may be cited as the
5 **“** _____ **Act of 2015”.**]

6 **(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—**The table of contents for
7 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Appointment and pay for directors of medical centers and Veterans Integrated Services Networks.
- Sec. 3. Adjustment of hours authorized for certain full-time employees of Veterans Health Administration.
- Sec. 4. Public-private contributions for additional educational assistance for graduate degrees relating to mental health.
- Sec. 5. Modification to annual determination of staffing shortages in Veterans Health Administration.
- Sec. 6. Repeal of compensation panels to determine market pay for physicians and dentists.
- Sec. 7. Executive management fellowship program.
- Sec. 8. Accountability of leaders for managing the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Sec. 9. Modification to veterans preference.
- Sec. 10. Reemployment of former employees.
- Sec. 11. Recruiting database.
- Sec. 12. Human resources academy.
- Sec. 13. Promotional opportunities for technical experts.
- Sec. 14. Comptroller General study on succession planning.
- Sec. 15. Measures of Veterans Affairs hiring effectiveness.
- Sec. 16. Employment of students and recent graduates.
- Sec. 17. Exit surveys.

1 **SEC. 2. APPOINTMENT AND PAY FOR DIRECTORS OF MED-**
2 **ICAL CENTERS AND VETERANS INTEGRATED**
3 **SERVICES NETWORKS.**

4 (a) APPOINTMENT.—Paragraph (4) of section
5 7306(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to
6 read as follows:

7 “(4) Such medical directors and directors of
8 Veterans Integrated Service Networks as may be ap-
9 pointed to suit the needs of the Department, who, to
10 the extent practicable, shall be a qualified doctor of
11 medicine, a qualified doctor of dental surgery or
12 dental medicine, or other qualified medical profes-
13 sional.”.

14 (b) PAY.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter IV of chapter 74
2 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by add-
3 ing after section 7459 the following new section:

4 **“§ 7460. Medical directors and directors of Veterans**
5 **Integrated Service Networks**

6 “(a) ELEMENTS OF PAY.—Pay for covered directors
7 shall consist of the following elements:

8 “(1) Base pay as provided for under subsection
9 (b).

10 “(2) Market pay as provided for under sub-
11 section (c).

12 “(b) BASE PAY.—Each covered director is entitled to
13 base pay determined under subsection (a)(1) of section
14 7404 of this title.

15 “(c) MARKET PAY.—(1) Each covered director is eli-
16 gible for market pay under this subsection.

17 “(2) Market pay shall consist of pay intended to re-
18 flect the recruitment and retention needs for the assign-
19 ment (as defined by the Secretary) of a particular covered
20 director.

21 “(3) The annual amount of the market pay payable
22 to a covered director shall be determined by the Secretary
23 on a case-by-case basis.

24 “(4) In determining the amount of market pay for
25 covered directors, the Secretary shall—

1 “(A) consult two or more national surveys of
2 pay for hospital directors, medical facility directors,
3 or others individuals in similar positions, whether
4 prepared by private, public, or quasi-public entities
5 in order to make a general assessment of the range
6 of pays payable to covered directors, as applicable;
7 and

8 “(B) take into account—

9 “(i) the experience of the covered director
10 in managing facilities or program offices of the
11 Department;

12 “(ii) the experience of the covered director
13 in managing medical facilities for other depart-
14 ments or agencies of the Federal Government,
15 private entities, or non-profit entities;

16 “(iii) the complexity of the facility man-
17 aged or to be managed by the covered director;

18 “(iv) the labor market for hospital direc-
19 tors, medical facility directors, or other individ-
20 uals in similar positions, which may cover any
21 geographic area the Secretary considers appro-
22 priate; and

23 “(v) such other considerations as the Sec-
24 retary considers appropriate.

1 “(5) The amount of market pay of a covered director
2 shall be evaluated by the Secretary not less often than
3 once every two years. The amount of market pay may be
4 adjusted as the result of such an evaluation. A covered
5 director whose market pay is so evaluated shall receive
6 written notice of the results of such evaluation.

7 “(d) REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITATIONS ON TOTAL
8 PAY.—(1)(A) Not less often than once every two years,
9 the Secretary shall prescribe for Department-wide applica-
10 bility the minimum and maximum amounts of annual pay
11 that may be paid under this section to covered directors.

12 “(B) Amounts prescribed under subparagraph (A)
13 shall be published in the Federal Register, and shall not
14 take effect until at least 60 days after the date of publica-
15 tion.

16 “(2) The sum of the total amount of the annual rate
17 of base pay payable to a covered director under subsection
18 (b) and the market pay determined for the covered direc-
19 tor under subsection (c) may not be less than the min-
20 imum amount, nor more than the maximum amount, spec-
21 ified pursuant to paragraph (1)(A).

22 “(3) In no case may the total amount of compensa-
23 tion paid to a covered director in any year exceed the
24 amount of annual compensation (excluding expenses)
25 specified in section 102 of title 3.

1 “(e) TREATMENT OF PAY.—Pay under subsections
2 (b) and (c) shall be considered pay for all purposes, includ-
3 ing retirement benefits under chapters 83 and 84 of title
4 5 and other benefits.

5 “(f) ANCILLARY EFFECTS OF DECREASES IN PAY.—
6 (1) A decrease in pay of a covered director resulting from
7 an adjustment in the amount of market pay of the covered
8 director under subsection (c) shall not be treated as an
9 adverse action.

10 “(2) A decrease in pay of a covered director resulting
11 from an involuntary reassignment in connection with a
12 disciplinary action taken against the covered director is
13 not subject to appeal.

14 “(g) DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Sec-
15 retary may delegate to an appropriate officer or employee
16 of the Department any responsibility of the Secretary
17 under this section, except for the responsibilities of the
18 Secretary under subsection (d)(1).

19 “(h) COVERED DIRECTORS DEFINED.—In this sec-
20 tion, the term ‘covered directors’ means medical directors
21 and directors of Veterans Integrated Service Networks ap-
22 pointed under section 7306(a)(4) of this title.”.

23 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
24 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended

1 by inserting after the item relating to section 7459
2 the following new item:

“7460. Medical directors and directors of Veterans Integrated Service Networks.”.

3 (3) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Chapter 74
4 of such title is further amended—

5 (A) in section 7404(a)(1) of such title is
6 amended by striking “The annual” and insert-
7 ing “Except as provided by section 7460 of this
8 title, the annual”; and

9 (B) in the heading for subchapter IV (and
10 in the item relating to such subchapter in the
11 table of sections at the beginning of such chap-
12 ter), by striking “HEALTH-CARE”.

13 **SEC. 3. ADJUSTMENT OF HOURS AUTHORIZED FOR CER-**
14 **TAIN FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES OF VETERANS**
15 **HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.**

16 Section 7423(a) of title 38, United States Code, is
17 amended—

18 (1) by striking “The hours of employment” and
19 inserting “(1) Except as provided by paragraph (2),
20 the hours of employment”; and

21 (2) by adding at the end the following new
22 paragraph:

23 “(2) The Secretary may modify the hours of employ-
24 ment for employees in a position specified in any of para-

1 graphs (1) through (6) of section 7421(b) of this title to
2 be more or less than 80 hours in a biweekly pay period
3 if the total hours of employment for such an employee does
4 not exceed 2,080 hours per calendar year.”.

5 **SEC. 4. PUBLIC-PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS FOR ADDI-**
6 **TIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR**
7 **GRADUATE DEGREES RELATING TO MENTAL**
8 **HEALTH.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3317 of title 38, United
10 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
11 lowing new subsection:

12 “(f) GRADUATE DEGREE IN MENTAL HEALTH.—(1)
13 As part of the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhance-
14 ment Program carried out under this section, the Sec-
15 retary shall carry out a program under which the Sec-
16 retary and a college or university that enters into an
17 agreement described in subsection (a) may make contribu-
18 tions pursuant to this subsection with respect to the full
19 cost of established charges of a veteran described in para-
20 graph (2).

21 “(2) A veteran described in this paragraph is a vet-
22 eran who—

23 “(A) is eligible for the program under sub-
24 section (a);

25 “(B) holds a bachelor’s degree;

1 “(C) is pursuing an advanced degree in mental
2 health at an institution of higher learning that par-
3 ticipates in the program under subsection (a); and

4 “(D) is pursuing such a degree with the inten-
5 tion of seeking employment as a mental health pro-
6 fessional in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

7 “(3) In determining the intention of a veteran under
8 paragraph (2)(D), the Secretary may not require the vet-
9 eran to enter into any binding agreement with respect to
10 such intention.

11 “(4) In determining the amount of matching con-
12 tributions pursuant to subsection (d)(1) for assistance
13 provided under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

14 “(A) substitute ‘66 percent’ for ‘up to 50 per-
15 cent’; and

16 “(B) substitute ‘34 percent’ for ‘an equal per-
17 centage’.

18 “(5) In accordance with section 7406 of this title, the
19 Secretary may establish residencies and internships at
20 medical facilities of the Department for veterans partici-
21 pating in the program under subsection (a).

22 “(6) If the Secretary employs a veteran who partici-
23 pates in the program under subsection (a) as a mental
24 health professional following such participation, to the

1 maximum extent practicable, the Secretary shall ensure
2 that—

3 “(A) the veteran is employed in a position lo-
4 cated in a rural area or an area that the Secretary
5 determines is in greatest need of mental health pro-
6 fessionals; and

7 “(B) the veteran is employed in a position that
8 directly relates to the treatment of veterans rather
9 than a research position.

10 “(7) In this subsection, the term ‘advanced degree
11 in mental health’ means a master’s degree, doctoral de-
12 gree, or other graduate or professional degree that the
13 Secretary determines would lead an individual to be em-
14 ployed in any of the following positions:

15 “(A) Psychiatrist.

16 “(B) Psychologist.

17 “(C) Mental health nurse.

18 “(D) Nurse assistant.

19 “(E) Physician assistant.

20 “(F) Pharmacist.

21 “(G) Social worker.

22 “(H) Licensed professional mental health coun-
23 selor.

24 “(I) Licensed marriage and family therapist.

25 “(J) Addiction therapist.

1 “(K) Occupational therapist.

2 “(L) Recreational therapist.

3 “(M) Vocational rehabilitation therapist.

4 “(N) Any other position the Secretary deter-
5 mines appropriate.”.

6 (b) PROHIBITION ON TRANSFER OF ELIGIBILITY.—

7 Section 3319(h) of such title is amended by adding at the
8 end the following new paragraph:

9 “(8) PROHIBITION ON CERTAIN CONTRIBU-
10 TIONS.—Entitlement transferred under this section
11 may not include eligibility for contributions under
12 section 3317(f) of this title.”.

13 (c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
14 this section shall apply with respect to a quarter, semester,
15 or term that begins on or after July 1, 2017.

16 **SEC. 5. MODIFICATION TO ANNUAL DETERMINATION OF**
17 **STAFFING SHORTAGES IN VETERANS HEALTH**
18 **ADMINISTRATION.**

19 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 7412 of
20 title 38, United States Code, is amended—

21 (1) by striking “the five occupations” and in-
22 sserting “the five clinical occupations and the five
23 nonclinical occupations”; and

1 (2) by striking “throughout the Department”
2 and inserting “with respect to each Veterans Inte-
3 grated Services Network,”.

4 (b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Subsection (b) of
5 such section is amended by striking “paragraph (1)” and
6 inserting “subsection (a)”.

7 **SEC. 6. REPEAL OF COMPENSATION PANELS TO DETER-**
8 **MINE MARKET PAY FOR PHYSICIANS AND**
9 **DENTISTS.**

10 Section 7431(c) of title 38, United States Code, is
11 amended—

12 (1) by striking paragraph (4);

13 (2) by redesignating paragraphs (5), (6), and
14 (7) as paragraphs (4), (5), and (6), respectively; and

15 (3) in paragraph (6), as so redesignated, by
16 striking “under paragraph (6)” and inserting
17 “under paragraph (5)”.

18 **SEC. 7. EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.**

19 (a) FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.—Chapter 7 of title 38,
20 United States Code is amended by adding at the end the
21 following new subchapter:

1 “SUBCHAPTER II—EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT
2 FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

3 **“§ 721. Executive Management Fellowship Program**

4 “(a) FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.—There is in the De-
5 partment an Executive Management Fellowship Program.
6 The purpose of the program shall be to provide eligible
7 employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration and
8 the Veterans Health Administration with training and ex-
9 perience in the private sector.

10 “(b) FELLOWSHIP.—(1) A fellowship provided under
11 this section is a one-year fellowship during which the eligi-
12 ble employee who is the recipient of the fellowship shall
13 receive training at a private-sector entity that is engaged
14 in the administration and delivery of health care or other
15 services similar to the benefits administered by the Sec-
16 retary.

17 “(2) The Secretary shall enter into such agreements
18 with private-sector entities as are necessary to carry out
19 this section.

20 “(c) SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.—In August of each
21 year, the Secretary shall select not fewer than 18 and not
22 more than 30 eligible employees to receive a fellowship
23 under this section. To the extent practicable, the Secretary
24 shall select such eligible employees from among eligible
25 employees who are veterans in a manner that is reflective

1 of the demographics of the veteran population of the
2 United States.

3 “(d) ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES.—For the purposes of
4 this section, an eligible employee is an employee of the
5 Veterans Benefits Administration or the Veterans Health
6 Administration who—

7 “(1) is compensated at a rate of basic pay not
8 less than the minimum rate of basic pay payable for
9 grade GS–14 of the General Schedule and not more
10 than either the minimum rate of basic pay payable
11 to a member of the Senior Executive Service under
12 section 5382 of title 5, United States Code, or the
13 minimum rate of basic pay payable pursuant to
14 chapter 74 of this title, as the case may be;

15 “(2) enters into an agreement with the Sec-
16 retary under subsection (e); and

17 “(3) submits to the Secretary an application
18 containing such information and assurances as the
19 Secretary may require.

20 “(e) AGREEMENTS.—An agreement between the Sec-
21 retary and a recipient of a fellowship shall be in writing,
22 shall be signed by the recipient, and shall include the fol-
23 lowing provisions:

24 “(1) The Secretary’s agreement—

1 “(A) to provide the recipient with a fellow-
2 ship under this section; and

3 “(B) to afford the participant the oppor-
4 tunity for employment in the Veterans Benefits
5 Administration (subject to the availability of
6 appropriated funds for such purpose and other
7 qualifications established in accordance with
8 section 7402 of this title).

9 “(2) The recipient’s agreement—

10 “(A) to accept the fellowship;

11 “(B) after completion of the fellowship, to
12 serve as a full-time employee in the Veterans
13 Benefits Administration for at least two years
14 as specified in the agreement; and

15 “(C) that, during the two-year period be-
16 ginning on the last day of the fellowship, the re-
17 cipient will not accept employment in the same
18 industry as the industry of the private entity at
19 which the recipient accepts the fellowship.

20 “(3) A provision that any financial obligation of
21 the United States arising out of an agreement en-
22 tered into under this subchapter, and any obligation
23 of the recipient which is conditioned on such agree-
24 ment, is contingent upon funds being appropriated
25 for educational assistance under this subchapter.

1 “(4) A statement of the damages to which the
2 United States is entitled under this subchapter for
3 the recipient’s breach of the agreement.

4 “(5) Such other terms as the Secretary deter-
5 mines are required to be included in the agreement.

6 “(f) TREATMENT OF RECIPIENTS.—The recipient of
7 a fellowship under this section shall be considered an em-
8 ployee of the Department for all purposes, including for
9 purposes of receiving a salary and benefits, and shall re-
10 main eligible for all promotion and incentive programs
11 otherwise available to such an employee.

12 “(g) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 60 days
13 after completing a fellowship under this section, a recipi-
14 ent of the fellowship shall submit to the Secretary a report
15 on the fellowship. Each such report shall describe the du-
16 ties of the recipient during the fellowship and any rec-
17 ommendations of the recipient for the application of indus-
18 try processes, technologies, and best practices. Not later
19 than seven days after receiving each such report, the Sec-
20 retary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs
21 of the Senate and House of Representatives such report
22 without change.

23 “(h) PRIVATE-SECTOR ENTITY DEFINED.—In this
24 section, the term ‘private-sector entity’ includes an entity
25 operating under a public-private partnership.”.

1 (b) DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later
2 than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
3 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement the Ex-
4 ecutive Management Fellowship Program required under
5 section 721 of title 38, United States Code, as added by
6 subsection (a).

7 (c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
8 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding
9 at the end the following new items:

“II—EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

“721. Executive Management Fellowship Program.”.

10 **SEC. 8. ACCOUNTABILITY OF LEADERS FOR MANAGING**
11 **THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 7 of title 38, United
13 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 709 the
14 following new section:

15 **“§ 709A. Annual performance plan for political ap-**
16 **pointees**

17 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct an
18 annual performance plan for each political appointee of
19 the Department that is similar to the annual performance
20 plan conducted for an employee of the Department who
21 is appointed as a career appointee (as that term is defined
22 in section 3132(a)(4) of title 5) within the Senior Execu-
23 tive Service at the Department.

1 “(b) ELEMENTS OF PLAN.—Each annual perform-
2 ance plan conducted under subsection (a) with respect to
3 a political appointee of the Department shall include an
4 assessment of whether the appointee is meeting the fol-
5 lowing goals:

6 “(1) Recruiting, selecting, and retaining well-
7 qualified individuals for employment at the Depart-
8 ment.

9 “(2) Engaging and motivating employees.

10 “(3) Training and developing employees and
11 preparing those employees for future leadership roles
12 within the Department.

13 “(4) Holding each employee of the Department
14 that is a manager accountable for addressing issues
15 relating to performance, in particular issues relating
16 to the performance of employees that report to the
17 manager.

18 “(c) DEFINITION OF POLITICAL APPOINTEE.—In
19 this section, the term ‘political appointee’ means an em-
20 ployee of the Department who holds—

21 “(1) a position which has been excepted from
22 the competitive service by reason of its confidential,
23 policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advoc-
24 ating character; or

1 “(2) a position in the Senior Executive Service
2 as a noncareer appointee (as such term is defined in
3 section 3132(a) of title 5).”.

4 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
5 at the beginning of chapter 7 of such title is amended by
6 inserting after the item relating to section 709 the fol-
7 lowing new item:

 “709A. Annual performance plan for political appointees.”.

8 **SEC. 9. MODIFICATION TO VETERANS PREFERENCE.**

9 (a) ACTIVE DUTY REQUIREMENT.—Section
10 2108(1)(B) and (D) of title 5, United States Code, are
11 amended by striking “consecutive” in each instance it ap-
12 pears and inserting “cumulative”.

13 (b) EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY OF RETIRED VET-
14 ERANS.—Section 2108(4) of title 5, United States Code,
15 is amended to read as follows:

16 “(4) ‘preference eligible’ includes a retired
17 member of the armed forces; and”.

18 (c) VETERANS PREFERENCE AT THE DEPARTMENT
19 OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—To the extent practicable, the
20 Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall select for appointment
21 to a senior executive position (as that term is defined in
22 section 713(g)(3) of title 38, United States Code) at the
23 Department of Veterans Affairs from the qualified can-
24 didates in the same manner and under the same condi-

1 tions required for the competitive service by sections 3308
2 through 3318 of title 5, United States Code.

3 **SEC. 10. REEMPLOYMENT OF FORMER EMPLOYEES.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
5 may noncompetitively appoint a qualified former employee
6 to any position within the competitive service or any ex-
7 cepted service position under chapter 74 of title 38, United
8 States Code, at the Department of Veterans Affairs that
9 is one grade higher than the grade of the position at the
10 Department most recently occupied by the employee.

11 (b) LIMITATION.—The Secretary may not appoint a
12 qualified former employee to a position that is more than
13 one grade (or equivalent) higher than the position at the
14 Department most recently occupied by the employee.

15 (c) DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED FORMER EM-
16 PLOYEE.—For purposes of this section, the term “quali-
17 fied former employee” means any individual who—

18 (1) formerly occupied any position at the De-
19 partment of Veterans Affairs within 2 years before
20 applying for reemployment at the Department;

21 (2) voluntarily left such position, or was subject
22 to a reduction in force, and had a satisfactory per-
23 formance record while occupying such position; and

24 (3) since leaving such position has maintained
25 licensing requirements, related to the position, if

1 any, and gained skill, knowledge, or other factors re-
2 lated to the position.

3 **SEC. 11. RECRUITING DATABASE.**

4 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans
5 Affairs shall establish a single database that lists each va-
6 cant position in the Department of Veterans Affairs that
7 the Secretary determines is critical to the mission of the
8 Department, difficult to fill, or both.

9 (b) QUALIFIED APPLICANT.—If the Secretary deter-
10 mines that an applicant for a vacant position listed in the
11 database established under subsection (a) is qualified for
12 such position but does not select the applicant for such
13 position, the Secretary, at the election of the applicant,
14 shall consider the applicant for other similar vacant posi-
15 tions listed in the database for which the applicant is
16 qualified.

17 (c) PROLONGED VACANCIES.—If the Secretary does
18 not fill a vacant position listed in the database established
19 under subsection (a) after a period determined appro-
20 priate by the Secretary, the Secretary—

21 (1) shall ensure that applicants described in
22 subsection (b) are considered for such position; and

23 (2) shall use the database established under
24 subsection (a) to assist in filling such position.

1 (d) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
2 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit
3 to Congress a report on the use and efficacy of the data-
4 base established under subsection (a).

5 **SEC. 12. HUMAN RESOURCES ACADEMY.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
7 shall provide to human resources professionals of the Vet-
8 erans Health Administration of the Department of Vet-
9 erans Affairs training on how to best recruit and retain
10 employees of the Veterans Health Administration, includ-
11 ing with respect to any recruitment and retention matters
12 that are unique to the Veterans Health Administration
13 pursuant to chapter 74 of title 38, United States Code,
14 or other provisions of law. The Secretary shall provide
15 such training in a manner that the Secretary determines
16 appropriate in light of budget, travel, and other con-
17 straints.

18 (b) AMOUNT OF TRAINING.—The Secretary shall en-
19 sure that each human resources professional of the Vet-
20 erans Health Administration receives the training de-
21 scribed in subsection (a)—

- 22 (1) as soon as practicable after being hired by
23 the Secretary as a human resource professional; and
24 (2) annually thereafter.

1 (c) CERTIFICATION.—The Secretary shall require
2 that each human resources professional of the Veterans
3 Health Administration, upon the completion of the train-
4 ing described in subsection (a), certifies that the profes-
5 sional received the training and understands the informa-
6 tion provided by the training.

7 (d) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit
8 to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of
9 Representatives and the Senate an annual report on the
10 training described in subsection (a), including the cost of
11 providing such training and the number of human re-
12 sources professionals who received such training during
13 the year covered by the report.

14 **SEC. 13. PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR TECHNICAL**
15 **EXPERTS.**

16 Not later than one year after the date of the enact-
17 ment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall
18 establish a promotional track system for employees of the
19 Department of Veterans Affairs that the Secretary deter-
20 mines are technical experts pursuant to regulations pre-
21 scribed by the Secretary for purposes of carrying out this
22 section. Such system shall—

23 (1) provide any such employee the opportunity
24 to advance within the Department without being re-
25 quired to transition to a management position; and

1 (2) for purposes of achieving career advance-
2 ment—

3 (A) provide for the establishment of new
4 positions within the Department; and

5 (B) notwithstanding any other provision of
6 law, provide for increases in pay for any such
7 employee.

8 **SEC. 14. COMPTROLLER GENERAL STUDY ON SUCCESSION**
9 **PLANNING.**

10 (a) **STUDY.**—The Comptroller General of the United
11 States shall conduct a study on each of the following:

12 (1) The succession planning at each medical fa-
13 cility of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

14 (2) The succession planning at the Veterans
15 Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery
16 Administration of the Department.

17 (b) **ELEMENTS.**—The study under subsection (a)
18 shall include, for each entity studied under the study, the
19 following:

20 (1) A determination of the mission-critical posi-
21 tions within the entity and the vacancy risk of such
22 positions.

23 (2) An analysis of the future needs for mission-
24 critical positions and gaps within the existing talent
25 pool of the entity.

1 (3) A description of strategies to close skill
2 gaps through the use of training for existing staff,
3 targeted recruitment, and hiring.

4 (4) A plan to regularly evaluate progress of
5 staff and update existing succession plans using
6 clear and measurable metrics and benchmarks.

7 (5) A demonstration of the capacity of the enti-
8 ty to execute succession plans with successful succes-
9 sion management strategies.

10 (6) Any other matters the Comptroller General
11 determines appropriate.

12 (c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
13 of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall
14 submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the
15 House of Representatives and the Senate a report con-
16 taining each study conducted under subsection (a).

17 **SEC. 15. INFORMATION ON HIRING EFFECTIVENESS.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
19 shall measure and collect information on indicators of hir-
20 ing effectiveness as follows:

21 (1) With respect to recruiting and hiring—

22 (A) the ability to reach and recruit well-
23 qualified talent from diverse talent pools, in-
24 cluding sources of candidates for mission-crit-
25 ical occupations;

1 (B) the use and impact of special hiring
2 authorities and flexibilities to recruit most
3 qualified applicants, including the use of stu-
4 dent internships as a talent pool for permanent
5 hires;

6 (C) the use and impact of special hiring
7 authorities and flexibilities to recruit diverse
8 candidates, including veteran, minority and dis-
9 abled candidates;

10 (D) the use and impact of special hiring
11 authorities and flexibilities to recruit candidates
12 for mission-critical occupations and occupations
13 with shortages;

14 (E) the age, educational level, and source
15 of applicants;

16 (F) the length of time between the date on
17 which a position is advertised and the date on
18 which a first offer of employment is made;

19 (G) the length of time between the date on
20 which a first offer of employment for a position
21 is made and the date on which a new hire
22 starts in that position;

23 (H) the number of internal and external
24 applicants for positions; and

1 (I) the number of offers accepted com-
2 pared to the number of offers made for perma-
3 nent positions.

4 (2) With respect to the hiring authority—

5 (A) the satisfaction of the hiring authority
6 with—

7 (i) the quality of new hires;

8 (ii) the match between the skills of
9 newly-hired individuals and the needs of
10 the Department;

11 (iii) the hiring process and hiring out-
12 comes after the first year [of the employ-
13 ment of a new hire]; and

14 (iv) the length of time that elapses to
15 fill a position and for a new hire to begin
16 working in a new position; and

17 (B) mission-critical deficiencies filled by
18 new hires and the connection between mission-
19 critical deficiencies and annual agency perform-
20 ance.

21 (3) Satisfaction of employment applicants with
22 the hiring process, including with respect to the clar-
23 ity of job announcement, reasons for withdrawal of
24 applications, user-friendliness of the application

1 process, communication regarding status of applica-
2 tion, and timeliness of hiring decision.

3 (4) With respect to a newly hired employee—

4 (A) the satisfaction of the employee with
5 the hiring process as described in paragraph
6 (3);

7 (B) the satisfaction with the process of
8 joining and becoming oriented with the Depart-
9 ment, including with respect to the timeliness of
10 such process after the hiring decision, the ori-
11 entation process, and being provided with time-
12 ly and useful new employee information and as-
13 sistance after the hire is made but before the
14 new hire starts in that position and after the
15 new hire has begun.

16 (C) attrition and reasons for leaving;

17 (D) investment in training and develop-
18 ment for the employee during the first year of
19 employment; and

20 (E) significant barriers to the effective re-
21 cruitment, selection, joining and becoming ori-
22 ented with the Department, and retention of
23 employees.

24 (b) DISAGGREGATION OF DATA.—To the extent prac-
25 ticable and in a manner which protects personally identifi-

1 able information of applicants and employees, the Sec-
2 retary shall collect and report data collected under sub-
3 section (a) disaggregated by facility or Veterans Inte-
4 grated Service Network.

5 (c) REPORTS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—On an annual basis, the Sec-
7 retary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’
8 Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Sen-
9 ate a report of the information collected under sub-
10 section (a).

11 (2) AVAILABILITY OF RECRUITING AND HIRING
12 INFORMATION.—On an annual basis, the Secretary
13 shall make publicly available the information col-
14 lected under subsection (a) in a consistent and ma-
15 chine-readable format to allow for a comparison of
16 hiring effectiveness and experience by Veterans Inte-
17 grated Service Network or comparable public or pri-
18 vate sector organization.

19 **SEC. 16. EMPLOYMENT OF STUDENTS AND RECENT GRAD-**
20 **UATES.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
22 shall prescribe regulations to allow for excepted service ap-
23 pointments of students and recent graduates leading to
24 conversion to career or career conditional employment of

1 a student or recent graduate of a qualifying educational
2 institution, as defined by the Department.

3 (b) APPLICABILITY.—The conversion authority de-
4 scribed in subsection (a) shall be applicable to individuals
5 in good standing who—

6 (1) are employed in a qualifying internship or
7 fellowship program at the Department;

8 (2) are employed in the Department in a volun-
9 teer capacity and performing substantive duties com-
10 parable to those of individuals in internship or fel-
11 lowship programs and meet the required number of
12 hours for conversion; or

13 (3) are employed in the Department under a
14 contract or agreement with an external non-profit
15 organization and performing substantive duties com-
16 parable to those of individuals in internship or fel-
17 lowship programs.

18 (c) UNIFORMITY.—For the purposes of subsections
19 (b)(2) and (b)(3), hours of work performed by an indi-
20 vidual employed shall be considered equal to those per-
21 formed by an individual employed in a qualifying intern-
22 ship or fellowship program by the Department.

23 **SEC. 17. EXIT SURVEYS.**

24 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
25 shall develop and carry out a standardized exit survey to

1 be voluntarily completed by career and noncareer employ-
2 ees and executives of the Department who voluntarily sep-
3 arate from the Department.

4 (b) SURVEY CONTENT.—The survey shall include, at
5 a minimum—

6 (1) reasons for leaving the Department;

7 (2) efforts made by the supervisor of the em-
8 ployee to retain the individual;

9 (3) the extent of job satisfaction and engage-
10 ment during the employment;

11 (4) the intent of employee to either remain em-
12 ployed within the Federal Government or to leave
13 employment with the Federal Government; and

14 (5) such other matters as the Secretary deter-
15 mines appropriate.

16 (c) ANONYMITY OF SURVEY CONTENT.—The Sec-
17 retary shall ensure that, to the extent possible, data col-
18 lected under subsection (a) is anonymized and personally
19 identifiable information is removed.

20 (e) SHARING OF SURVEY DATA.—The Secretary shall
21 ensure that the results of the survey required by sub-
22 section (a) are shared on an annual basis with directors
23 and managers of facilities of the Department and the Vet-
24 erans Integrated Service Networks.

1 (f) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
2 of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the
3 Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Af-
4 fairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a
5 report containing the aggregate results of the exit survey
6 under subsection (a) covering the year prior to the report.

7 The report shall include—

8 (1) an analysis of the most common reasons
9 employees choose to leave the Department;

10 (2) steps the Secretary is taking to improve re-
11 tention, particularly for mission-critical occupations;

12 (3) the demographic characteristics of employ-
13 ees choosing to leave the Department;

14 (4) any legislative barriers to improving em-
15 ployee retention; and

16 (5) the number of employees who took the exit
17 survey under subsection (a).