



UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

JOHNNY ISAKSON | CHAIRMAN

Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act

Bipartisan bill protects whistleblowers, makes it easier to discipline bad actors

When the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) cannot hold bad actors accountable, everyone loses. Taxpayer dollars are wasted on employees who are not fully committed to helping our veterans. Other employees at the VA suffer because they are forced to work alongside or take direction from delinquent individuals. Most egregiously, our veterans suffer because the people responsible for caring for them are putting themselves first – not our veterans.

The *Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act* will give the VA the tools it needs to hold bad actors accountable.

Protects Whistleblowers:

- Codifies the **Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection** at the VA and mandates that the head of the office be selected by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, **giving Congress more oversight over accountability** at the department.
- Requires the VA to evaluate supervisors based on the **protection of whistleblowers**.
- Requires the VA to provide department-wide **training regarding whistleblower complaints** once a year.

Makes it easier for the VA to remove senior executives:

- Gives the **VA secretary additional flexibility** in hiring and firing senior executives.
- **Removes the Merit Systems Protection Board** from the senior executive accountability process, requiring senior executives to appeal directly to the VA secretary under an expedited timeline.
- **Reduces benefits for employees** when they are disciplined or removed for misconduct.

Increases accountability for all employees at the VA:

- Grants the VA secretary the authority to **expedite the removal, demotion or suspension of employees** at the VA based on performance or misconduct.
- **Shortens the removal process for all employees** at the VA and ensures an individual appealing a removal from the VA is not kept on the VA's payroll.
- Places **limits on the amount of time employees can be placed on paid administrative leave** while being investigated.
- Incentivizes managers to **address poor performance and misconduct** among employees by requiring the VA secretary to include this as part of the annual performance plan.
- **Prohibits bonuses** for employees who have been found guilty of wrongdoing.
- **Prohibits relocation expenses** to employees who abuse the system.