

Manager's Package
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

Bill Language

1. Bill language for Senator Moran on prohibiting funding for the home marketing incentive programs with a waiver.
2. Bill language for Senator Shaheen on legal services at the Board of Veterans Appeals.

Report Language

1. Report language for Senator Tester on VA work-study programs.
2. Report language for Senator Murkowski on arctic military construction contracting.
3. Report language for Senator Feinstein on quarterly reporting on VHA/USACE major construction projects.
4. Report language for Senator Udall on the Federal burn pits registry.
5. Report language for Senator Baldwin on the Tomah VA Medical Center.
6. Report language for Senator Leahy on appointment scheduling.
7. Report language for Senator Merkley on the VA Nursing Handbook.

Home Marketing Incentive Program

At the appropriate place in the **bill**, insert the following:

Sec. XXX. None of the amounts appropriated or otherwise made available by title II may be used to carry out the Home Marketing Incentive Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs or to carry out the Appraisal Value Offer Program of the Department with respect to an employee of the Department in a senior executive position (as defined in section 713(g) of title 38, United States Code): Provided, That the Secretary may waive this prohibition with respect to the use of the Home Marketing Incentive Program and Appraisal Value Offer Program to recruit for a position for which recruitment or retention of qualified personnel is likely to be difficult in the absence of the use of these incentives: Provided further, That within 15 days of a determination by the Secretary to waive this prohibition, the Secretary shall submit written notification thereof to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress containing the reasons and identifying the position title for which the waiver has been issued.

Board of Veterans Appeals Legal Services

At the appropriate place in the **bill**, insert the following:

Provided, That up to \$2,500,000 may be available to facilitate the furnishing of legal and other assistance, without charge, to veterans and other individuals who are unable to afford the cost of legal representation in connection with a decision by the Board of Veterans' Appeals under chapter 71 of title 38, United States Code, in accordance with the process and reporting procedures set forth in Public Law 102-229 under the heading 'Salaries and Expenses' under the heading 'Court of Veterans Appeals': Provided further, That the Board of Veterans' Appeals submits to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a certification that there is a substantial unmet need for pro bono representation before the Board of Veterans' Appeals prior to expending funds for this purpose.

VA Work-Study Program

At the appropriate place in the **report**, insert the following:

Work-Study Program.—The VA work-study program allows veterans and eligible dependents who are in school to be paid for working up to 20 hours a week on a job that is directly related to Department activities. These activities could be part-time work at a local VA hospital, benefits office, Vet Center, or at the school handling VA-related work. The program not only helps the student cover school-related expenses, it also gives them work experience that can help bolster their resume as they search for employment after graduation. The Committee supports this program and is very concerned about recent reports of delays in the VA processing of work-study participants pay. The Committee is aware that in some locations it is taking as long as 40 days for the pay to be processed. This is unacceptable and the Department is directed to report to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress within 60 days on steps it is taking to better monitor the time it takes to process pay for work-study participants and to address any identified delays in the process.

Arctic Military Construction Contracting

At the appropriate place in the **report**, insert the following:

Utilization of the Alaska Workforce in Military Construction.—The Committee encourages the Department of Defense and the Armed Services to conduct proactive outreach to contractors located in Alaska and experienced in Arctic construction techniques and constraints in the execution of the military construction program for Alaska provided in this bill. The Committee urges the Department to conduct such outreach as near to the construction location as possible to maximize local participation. The Committee further encourages the Department to coordinate its outreach with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, local colleges and universities, vocational and technical training providers and other organizations involved in Alaska workforce development to ensure that an experienced workforce is available for the execution of these critical national security projects.

VA/Army Corps of Engineers

At the appropriate place in the **report**, insert the following:

VA/Army Corps of Engineers.—The Committee directs the Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure there are no unnecessary delays in completing major Veterans Health Administration (VHA) construction projects. The Committee is particularly concerned about delays affecting VHA projects to retrofit or replace seismically deficient buildings, which put veterans, federal employees, and the public at significant risk. The Department in conjunction with the Corps is directed to provide quarterly updates to the Committee on all major VHA construction projects managed by the Corps.

Federal Burn Pits Registry

At the appropriate place in the **report**, insert the following:

Promotion of Federal Burn Pits Registry.—The Committee directs the Department to work with State Governors and State veterans affairs agencies to promote and educate State officials about the federal Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. The Committee is concerned that efforts by the States have led to confusion among veterans about which registry is the official registry of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The Committee urges the Department to increase outreach to veterans and State governments to communicate the existence and purpose of the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

Tomah VA Medical Center

At the appropriate place in the **report**, insert the following:

Furthermore, to ensure transparency and accountability, the Department is directed to make public the findings of the Office of Accountability Review's investigation of accusations of widespread retaliation against whistleblowers and the culture of fear at the Tomah VA Medical Center as well as the outside clinical review, which is being done in follow-up to VA's initial review of the incidents at the facility. The Committee is disappointed with the pace of these reviews and expects VA to make the findings public without further delay.

Appointment Scheduling

At the appropriate place in the **report**, insert the following:

On page 40 of the report, on the 14th line, after the word “violations”, strike the word “persist” and insert “occurred”, and on line 15, after the closed parenthetical, delete the comma through the end of the sentence.

Nursing Handbook

At the appropriate place in the **report**, insert the following:

On page 44 of the report, in the paragraph beginning with “Nursing Handbook,” after the 4th sentence insert the following sentence: “The VA should also consider the benefits to veterans of having more VA healthcare staff able to provide services at the full scope of their training and how this will affect veterans, particularly in rural communities.”