

Union Calendar No. 293

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3705

[Report No. 115-397]

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to require the use of certified mail and plain language in certain debt collection activities.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 7, 2017

Ms. PINGREE introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

NOVEMBER 7, 2017

Additional sponsors: Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire and Mr. YOUNG of Iowa

NOVEMBER 7, 2017

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italie*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on September 7, 2017]

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to require the use of certified mail and plain language in certain debt collection activities.

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 “Veterans Fair Debt No-*
5 *tice Act of 2017”.*

6 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NOTICE RE-**
7 **LATING TO DEBT COLLECTION ACTIVITIES.**

8 (a) *DEBT NOTIFICATION LETTERS.*—*The Secretary of*
9 *Veterans Affairs shall collaborate with veterans service orga-*
10 *nizations to write a standard letter to be provided to indi-*
11 *viduals who the Secretary determines owe debts to the De-*
12 *partment of Veterans Affairs. Such letter shall be written*
13 *in plain language and shall include a notice of the debt*
14 *and a clear explanation of—*

15 (1) *why the individual owes money to the De-*
16 *partment of Veterans Affairs; and*

17 (2) *the options available to the individual.*

18 (b) *DELIVERY OF LETTERS.*—*The Secretary shall de-*
19 *velop a method by which individuals may elect to receive*
20 *debt notification letters by electronic means and shall en-*
21 *sure, to the extent practicable, that the letter developed*
22 *under subsection (a) is delivered to intended recipients who*
23 *have made such an election by both standard mail and by*
24 *electronic means and to intended recipients who have not*
25 *made such an election only by standard mail.*

1 (c) *NOTICE TO CONGRESS.*—

2 (1) *NOTICE OF COMPLETION.*—Upon completion
3 of the letter required under subsection (a), the Sec-
4 retary shall submit to Congress notice of the comple-
5 tion of the letter.

6 (2) *PROGRESS REPORTS.*—If the Secretary has
7 not submitted the notice required by paragraph (1) by
8 the date that is 90 days after the date of the enact-
9 ment of this Act, the Secretary shall—

10 (A) submit to Congress a report describing
11 the progress of the Secretary toward imple-
12 menting subsection (a) and an explanation for
13 why the letter has not been completed; and

14 (B) every 30 days thereafter until the sub-
15 mittal of the notice required by paragraph (1),
16 submit to Congress an update to the report
17 under subparagraph (A) that includes an addi-
18 tional explanation for the failure to complete the
19 letter.

20 (d) *STUDY; REPORT.*—

21 (1) *STUDY.*—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
22 shall conduct a study on the process by which the De-
23 partment of Veterans Affairs notifies veterans of debt
24 collection efforts. Such study shall include—

1 (A) *an analysis of the scope of the problem*
2 *of veterans not receiving debt collection notices;*

3 (B) *a description of any non-legislative ac-*
4 *tions the Secretary could take to reduce the num-*
5 *ber of incorrect or unknown addresses of veterans*
6 *in the databases of the Department and a*
7 *timeline for adopting such actions; and*

8 (C) *an estimate of the costs associated with*
9 *sending debt collection notices by certified mail.*

10 (2) *REPORT.—Not later than 12 months after the*
11 *date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall*
12 *submit to Congress a report on the study conducted*
13 *under paragraph (1).*

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