

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4771

AN ACT

To amend title 38, United States Code, to permit appellants to appear in cases before the Board of Veterans' Appeals by picture and voice transmission from locations other than facilities 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.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “VA Tele-Hearing Mod-
 5 ernization Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. HEARINGS BEFORE THE BOARD OF VETERANS’ AP-**
 7 **PEALS BY MEANS OF TELECONFERENCE**
 8 **FROM LOCATIONS OTHER THAN FACILITIES**
 9 **OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AF-**
 10 **FAIRS.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7107(c)(2) of title 38,
 12 United States Code, is amended—

13 (1) in subparagraph (A), by inserting “or sub-
 14 paragraph (C) of this paragraph” after “subpara-
 15 graph (B) of such paragraph”;

16 (2) in subparagraph (B), by inserting “or sub-
 17 paragraph (C) of this paragraph” after “subpara-
 18 graph (A) of such paragraph”; and

19 (3) by adding at the end the following new sub-
 20 paragraph (C):

21 “(C)(i) Upon notification of a Board hearing under
 22 subparagraph (A) or (B) of paragraph (1), the appellant
 23 may alternatively request a hearing by picture and voice
 24 transmission—

25 “(I) at a location selected by the appellant; and

1 “(II) via a secure internet platform established
2 and maintained by the Secretary that protects sen-
3 sitive personal information from a data breach.

4 “(ii) If an appellant makes a request under clause
5 (i), the Board shall grant such request.”.

6 (b) DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION.—The Sec-
7 retary shall implement the amendments made by sub-
8 section (a) not later than 180 days after the date of the
9 enactment of this Act.

10 (c) REPORTING.—

11 (1) ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Sec-
12 tion 7101(d)(2) of such title is amended—

13 (A) in subparagraph (E), by striking “;
14 and” and inserting a semicolon;

15 (B) in subparagraph (F), by striking the
16 period at the ending and inserting “; and”; and

17 (C) by adding at the end the following new
18 subparagraph:

19 “(G) with respect to hearings scheduled under
20 section 7107(c)(2)(C) of this title—

21 “(i) the number of hearings scheduled
22 under such section;

23 “(ii) the number of hearings under such
24 section that were cancelled; and

“(iii) any statistical difference in outcomes between cases heard under such section and those held at the principal location of the Board or by picture and voice transmission at a facility of the Department.”.

(2) ONE-TIME REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

The first report required to be submitted under section 7101(d) of title 38, United States Code, shall include the following information with respect to hearings scheduled under subparagraph (C) of paragraph (2) of subsection (c) of section 7101 of such title, as added by subsection (a):

(A) An outline of the outreach the Secretary of Veterans Affairs plans to conduct to inform veterans, families of veterans, survivors of veterans, veterans service organizations, military service organizations, congressional caseworkers, advocates for veterans, and such other stakeholders as the Secretary considers appropriate about hearings scheduled under such subparagraph, including—

(i) a description of the resources required to conduct such outreach;

(ii) a timeline for conducting such outreach; and

1 (iii) information related to the advan-
2 tages and potential technological challenges
3 of conducting hearings under such sub-
4 paragraph.

5 (B) A description of any modifications to
6 the information technology systems of the Vet-
7 erans Benefits Administration and the Board of
8 Veterans' Appeals required to carry out hear-
9 ings under such subparagraph, including cost
10 estimates and a timeline for making such modi-
11 fications.

12 (C) A detailed description of the intra-
13 agency partnership between the Board of Vet-
14 erans' Appeals and the telehealth program of
15 the Veterans Health Administration as the
16 Board conducts hearings under such subpara-
17 graph, including best practices, a risk assess-
18 ment overview, risk mitigation efforts, and a
19 plan for ongoing collaboration and information
20 sharing.

21 (d) COLLABORATION.—In developing the capacity
22 and procedures to conduct hearings under subparagraph
23 (C) of paragraph (2) of subsection (c) of section 7101 of
24 title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a),
25 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall collaborate with,

- 1 partner with, and give weight to the advice of veterans
- 2 service organizations and such other stakeholders as the
- 3 Secretary considers appropriate.

Passed the House of Representatives November 12,
2019.

Attest:

Clerk.

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