

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1255

To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend to Black veterans of World War II, and surviving spouses and certain direct descendants of such veterans, eligibility for certain housing loans and educational assistance administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 28, 2023

Mr. MOULTON (for himself and Mr. CLYBURN) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend to Black veterans of World War II, and surviving spouses and certain direct descendants of such veterans, eligibility for certain housing loans and educational assistance administered by the Secretary 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 “Sgt. Isaac Woodard,
5 Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act
6 of 2023”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) African Americans played a pivotal role in
4 the war effort during World War II, with more than
5 1,200,000 African Americans serving in the Armed
6 Forces, and, by 1945, approximately 1.9 percent of
7 all officers in the Armed Forces were African Ameri-
8 cans.

9 (2) Following World War II, the Servicemen's
10 Readjustment Act of 1944 (58 Stat. 284, commonly
11 known as the "GI Bill") offered substantial material
12 benefits to 16,000,000 veterans to assist them in re-
13 integrating into civil society.

14 (3) The GI Bill offered a range of economic and
15 educational benefits administered by the Federal
16 Government through the Secretary of the Veterans
17 Administration, including monetary assistance to ac-
18 cess higher education, government guarantees for
19 housing loans, unemployment allowances, and civil-
20 ian workforce reentry assistance.

21 (4) Though the legislative text of the GI Bill
22 was race neutral, the administration of benefits
23 through national, State, and local Veterans Adminis-
24 tration offices resulted in a pattern of discrimination
25 against racial minorities, especially African Ameri-
26 cans.

1 (5) Veterans Administration benefits counselors
2 denied African Americans access to educational ben-
3 efits at certain universities and funneled applicants
4 into industrial and vocational schools rather than
5 higher education opportunities, with just 6 percent
6 of African-American veterans of World War II earn-
7 ing a college degree, compared to 19 percent of
8 White veterans of World War II.

9 (6) In administering its housing guaranty pro-
10 gram, the Veterans Administration adopted the Fed-
11 eral Housing Administration's racial exclusion pro-
12 grams, also known as redlining, which excluded a
13 significant number of African Americans from tak-
14 ing full advantage of the housing guaranty program.

15 (7) The GI Bill created substantial economic
16 growth and wealth accumulation for those who could
17 benefit, but discriminatory administration of the
18 program prevented many African-American veterans
19 of World War II from enjoying the full economic
20 prosperity of the post-war period.

1 **SEC. 3. HOUSING LOANS GUARANTEED BY THE SECRETARY**
2 **OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR BLACK VET-**
3 **ERANS OF WORLD WAR II AND SURVIVORS**
4 **AND CERTAIN DIRECT DESCENDANTS OF**
5 **SUCH VETERANS.**

6 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Chapter 37 of title 38,
7 United States Code, is amended as follows:

8 (1) DEFINITION.—Section 3701(b) of such title
9 is amended by adding at the end the following new
10 paragraphs:

11 “(8) The term ‘veteran’ also includes, for pur-
12 poses of housing loans, an individual who—

13 “(A) is Black;

14 “(B) served on active duty as a member of
15 the Armed Forces during World War II; and

16 “(C) certifies to the Secretary that such
17 individual was denied a specific benefit under
18 the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (58
19 Stat. 284) on the basis of race.

20 “(9) The term ‘veteran’ also includes, for pur-
21 poses of housing loans, an individual who—

22 “(A) is the surviving spouse, child, grand-
23 child, or other direct descendant of a veteran
24 described in paragraph (8);

25 “(B) certifies to the Secretary that such
26 veteran described in paragraph (8) was denied

1 a specific benefit under the Servicemen’s Read-
2 justment Act of 1944 (58 Stat. 284) on the
3 basis of race; and

4 “(C) is living on the date of the enactment
5 of the Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph
6 H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023.”.

7 (2) BASIC ENTITLEMENT.—Section
8 3702(a)(2)(E) of such title is amended by adding at
9 the end the following new subparagraph:

10 “(H) Each individual—

11 “(i) described in paragraph (8) or (9) of
12 section 3701(b) of this title; and

13 “(ii) who applies for a housing loan during
14 the five-year period beginning on the date of
15 the enactment of the Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr.
16 and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration
17 Act of 2023.”.

18 (b) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall carry out the
19 amendment made by this section not later than 90 days
20 after the date of the enactment of this Act.

21 (c) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
22 fairs shall prescribe regulations to carry out the amend-
23 ments made by this section.

24 (d) GAO REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
25 deadline under subsection (b), the Comptroller General of

1 the United States shall submit to Congress a report re-
2 garding—

3 (1) the number of individuals who received
4 housing loan benefits pursuant to the amendments
5 made by this section; and

6 (2) the total value of housing loan benefits ad-
7 ministered by the Secretary pursuant to the amend-
8 ments made by this section.

9 **SEC. 4. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR SURVIVORS AND**
10 **CERTAIN DIRECT DESCENDANTS OF BLACK**
11 **VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II.**

12 (a) ENTITLEMENT.—Subsection (b) of section 3311
13 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at
14 the end the following new paragraph:

15 “(12) An individual—

16 “(A) described in section 3701(b)(9) of
17 this title; and

18 “(B) who applies for educational assistance
19 under this chapter during the five-year period
20 beginning on the date of the enactment of the
21 Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H.
22 Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023.”.

23 (b) DEADLINE.—The Secretary shall carry out the
24 amendment made by this section not later than 90 days
25 after the date of the enactment of this Act.

1 (c) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
2 fairs shall prescribe regulations to carry out the amend-
3 ment made by this section.

4 (d) GAO REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
5 deadline under subsection (b), the Comptroller General of
6 the United States shall submit to Congress a report re-
7 garding—

8 (1) the number of individuals who received edu-
9 cational assistance pursuant to the amendment
10 made by this section; and

11 (2) the total amount of educational assistance
12 paid by the Secretary pursuant to the amendment
13 made by this section.

14 **SEC. 5. BLUE RIBBON PANEL ON BENEFITS AND ASSIST-**
15 **ANCE FOR FEMALE AND MINORITY VET-**
16 **ERANS.**

17 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 30 days after
18 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
19 Veterans Affairs shall, pursuant to the Federal Advisory
20 Committee Act (Public Law 92–463; 5 U.S.C. App.), ap-
21 point a panel of independent experts on—

22 (1) inequities in the distribution of benefits and
23 assistance administered by the Secretary; and

24 (2) military service by female and minority
25 members of the Armed Forces.

1 (b) DUTIES.—The panel shall develop recommenda-
2 tions regarding additional benefits and assistance for indi-
3 viduals described in subsection (a)(2), and related legisla-
4 tion.

5 (c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
6 of the enactment of this Act, the panel shall submit to
7 Congress and the President a report containing the rec-
8 ommendations developed under this section.

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