

EMPOWER VETERANS WITH ACCESS TO QUALITY AND TIMELY HEALTH CARE

Restore Rigorous VA Oversight and Accountability

Those entrusted to care for our nation's veterans must meet the standards America expects of them. Congress can restore a culture of accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs through robust oversight.

THE ISSUE The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has repeatedly failed to meet its obligations to care for veterans and be responsive to Congress, undermining trust in its mission to support their health care needs. In the face of widespread VA personnel and policy failures, Congress needs to change the agency's incentives to restore trust.

Protecting VA leaders and staff who do not take their responsibilities seriously or mismanage taxpayer resources harms our nation's veterans and demoralizes dedicated employees who want to help those who have served to the best of their abilities.

POLICY SOLUTIONS RESTORE VA ACCOUNTABILITY

Congress should restore the VA's ability to hold employees accountable for misconduct without undue delays. The VA had these tools but [stopped enforcing](#) them due to judicial and administrative rulings which gutted previous personnel accountability legislation. Improving VA personnel incentives need not come at the expense of due process and is [direly needed](#).

REQUIRE TRANSPARENT WAIT TIMES

To end the agency's widespread practice of relying on outdated, manipulation-prone wait time measurements, Congress should codify [VA MISSION Act regulations](#) measuring wait times from a veteran's date of request for an appointment to their date of treatment. Congress should also require the VA to publicly report accurately measured wait times and appointment completion data at the national, VISN, and facility level.

CONDUCT AN INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE VA

An agency requesting a \$369 billion budget should be able to answer basic questions about how much money it has, but the VA cannot. Last July, the VA told Congress that it needed an [extra \\$15 billion](#) not previously accounted for, including \$3 billion by the end of September, in order to honor veterans' benefits payments. After Congress passed an emergency supplemental, the VA later admitted that it never used any of those funds before the end of the fiscal year because it [realized it had billions](#) in carried-over cash reserves all along. Congress should require the VA to undergo an annual DoD-style external audit as a condition of future appropriations.

**POLICY
SOLUTIONS
CONTINUED****REVIEW VA STAFFING LEVELS**

The VA's authorized full-time equivalent (FTE) [staff has rapidly expanded](#) even as the veteran population declines, departing from more flexible prior practice. Congress should not authorize additional VA FTEs for 2025 while there are [41,000 existing VA vacancies](#) as of late 2024. Congress should commission an independent audit of VA staffing levels; Secretary Collins should use this report to guide right-sizing VA headcounts in line with industry standards.

HARNESS THE POWER OF THE PURSE

The best way for Congress to restore an agency's accountability is by tying its funding to results. To ensure the VA is more transparent and responsive than in years' past, Congress should create consequences for leadership failing to carry out legislation, such as funding penalties for the Office of the Secretary and freezes on performance bonuses for Senior Executives.

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