

Veterans Transition Support Act

Many veterans have difficulty filing post-discharge VA disability claims. Exacerbating this difficulty is the frequent need to substantiate the claim with medical and personnel records stored in centrally managed records repositories.

Servicemembers currently receive some education about filing disability benefits through the [Transition Assistance Program](#)—however, the TAP sessions contain such a large volume of information compressed into a short time that it can be difficult for transitioning servicemembers to file claims immediately as a result of TAP. In addition, the VA has [delayed modernizing its health records system](#) into an electronic health record— which means the DOD health record system and the VA health record system are not yet compatible. Consequently, TRICARE [currently recommends that veterans print or photograph their health record](#) while they are in the service and bring those photographs or printouts with them when seeing a provider—many veterans have anecdotally reported challenges keeping this paper record on hand.

This bill seeks to reduce the burden of the VA disability claims process on veterans by leveraging the VA's Solid Start program. Through Solid Start, VA representatives call new veterans three times during their first-year post-discharge to convey information about VA benefits programs and to connect veterans in crisis with appropriate mental health resources.

This bill would amend the Solid Start program by requiring that a VA representative contact transitioning servicemembers one additional time between 120-210 days *prior to* separation, timed to coincide with their eligibility to file a VA disability claim through the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program. This contact would provide servicemembers, who have ready access to their medical and personal records, the information to file a claim through BDD, enabling the VA to rapidly deliver a decision and assign a VA disability rating, if warranted. Utilizing this program would minimize gaps in medical care and prescription medication support and activate other rating-dependent benefits. Additionally, the VA representative would connect transitioning servicemembers in crisis with appropriate resources, as needed.

Adding this call about disability benefits before they leave the service aims to provide servicemembers with the information they need to file a claim while they still have ready access to their medical and personal records. Applying for benefits before leaving the service would let the VA make a decision on benefits earlier, leading to a more seamless transition and less of a coverage gap between exiting the service and receiving benefits.

To support the Veterans Transition Support Act to assist our servicemembers through their transition, or if you have any questions, please reach out to Grace Brightbill with Rep. Beyer at grace.brightbill@mail.house.gov.