

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1635

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to take certain actions to improve the processing by the Department of Veterans Affairs of claims for disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 17, 2023

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. ROUNDS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to take certain actions to improve the processing by the Department of Veterans Affairs of claims for disability compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder, 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 “Department of Vet-  
5 erans Affairs Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Processing  
6 Claims Improvement Act of 2023”.

1 **SEC. 2. IMPROVING PROCESSING BY DEPARTMENT OF VET-**  
2 **ERANS AFFAIRS OF DISABILITY CLAIMS FOR**  
3 **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.**

4 (a) TRAINING FOR CLAIMS PROCESSORS WHO HAN-  
5 DLE CLAIMS RELATING TO POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS  
6 DISORDER.—

7 (1) UPDATE TRAINING PROGRAMS.—Not later  
8 than 180 days after the date of the enactment of  
9 this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, act-  
10 ing through the Under Secretary for Benefits, up-  
11 date an ongoing, national training program for  
12 claims processors who review claims for compensa-  
13 tion for service-connected post-traumatic stress dis-  
14 order.

15 (2) PARTICIPATION REQUIRED.—Beginning on  
16 the date that is 180 days after the date of the enact-  
17 ment of this Act, the Secretary shall require that  
18 each claims processor described in paragraph (1)  
19 participates in the training established under para-  
20 graph (1) at least once each year beginning in the  
21 second year in which the claims processor carries out  
22 the duties of the claims processor for the Depart-  
23 ment.

24 (3) REQUIRED ELEMENTS.—The training estab-  
25 lished under paragraph (1) shall include instruction  
26 on stressor development and verification.

1 (b) STANDARDIZATION OF TRAINING AT REGIONAL  
2 OFFICES.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the  
3 enactment of this Act, the Secretary, acting through the  
4 Under Secretary, shall standardize the training provided  
5 at regional offices of the Veterans Benefits Administration  
6 to the employees of such regional offices.

7 (c) FORMAL PROCESS FOR CONDUCT OF ANNUAL  
8 ANALYSIS OF TRENDS.—Not later than 180 days after the  
9 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, acting  
10 through the Under Secretary, shall establish a formal  
11 process to analyze, on an annual basis, training needs  
12 based on identified processing error trends.

13 (d) FORMAL PROCESS FOR CONDUCT OF ANNUAL  
14 STUDIES.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days  
16 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
17 retary, acting through the Under Secretary, shall es-  
18 tablish a formal process to conduct, on an annual  
19 basis, studies to help guide the national training  
20 program established under subsection (a)(1).

21 (2) ELEMENTS.—Each study conducted under  
22 paragraph (1) shall cover the following:

23 (A) Military post-traumatic stress disorder  
24 stressors.

1 (B) Decision-making claims for claims  
2 processors.

3 (e) ANNUAL UPDATES TO POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS  
4 DISORDER PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE.—Not later than 180  
5 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and not  
6 less frequently than once each year thereafter, the Sec-  
7 retary, acting through the Under Secretary, shall evaluate  
8 the guidance relating to post traumatic stress disorder to  
9 determine if updates are warranted to provide claims proc-  
10 essors of the Department with better resources regarding  
11 best practices for claims processing, including specific  
12 guidance regarding development of claims involving com-  
13 pensation for service-connected posttraumatic stress dis-  
14 order.

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