

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Statement of Regulatory Priorities for Fiscal Year 2026

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers services and benefits that recognize the important Federal obligations to those who served this nation. VA's regulatory responsibility is to faithfully execute the mandates of the laws enacted by Congress relating to programs for Veterans and their families. VA's major regulatory objective is to implement these laws with fairness, justice, efficiency, and fiscal responsibility.

Most of the regulations issued by VA relate to functions of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). The primary mission of VBA is to provide high-quality and timely non-medical benefits to eligible Veterans and their dependents. The primary mission of VHA is to provide timely, high-quality health care to eligible Veterans through its system of medical centers, nursing homes, domiciliaries, outpatient medical and dental facilities, and through a vast network of community providers. The primary mission of NCA is to honor and bury eligible Veterans and their dependents in VA National Cemeteries, maintaining these cemeteries as national shrines in perpetuity and commemorating their service and sacrifice to our nation.

In addition to the primary missions for each VA component listed above, VA's FY26 regulatory agenda emphasizes fiscal responsibility, aligning with the deregulatory priorities in Executive Order (E.O.) 14219, and modernizing regulations to enhance VA's efficiency and transparency. This agenda will prudently allocate resources while appropriately providing benefits and services for our nation's Veterans, spouses, survivors, dependents, and caregivers. Key policy focuses include:

- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Ensuring regulatory activities and initiatives are cost-effective, provide the best value for Veterans and taxpayers, and reduce the financial burden on Veterans.
- **Deregulation and E.O. 14219 Compliance:** Reducing regulatory burdens and eliminating unnecessary regulations to foster innovation and streamline processes.
- **Program Integrity and Efficiency:** Removing outdated or duplicative regulations to improve efficiency, ensure optimal adherence to statutory authority, and clarify VA's legal and administrative processes.

- **Modernizing Regulations:** Updating and refining VA's regulations to reflect current best practices, enhance health care services, advance technological integration, and meet the evolving needs of Veterans.

In pursuit of the aforementioned goals, VA highlights the following regulatory accomplishments during FY25:

- *Extension of Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Eligibility for Legacy Participants and Legacy Applicants (2900-AR28).* VA extended through September 2028 the transition period for participants, applicants, and Family Caregivers known as the “legacy cohort.” This action prevented termination of this cohorts' eligibility to ensure that they continue to receive the services, stipends, and other benefits that they have come to rely on.

- *Health Care Professionals Practicing Telehealth (2900-AQ59).* VA implemented the authorities of the VA MISSION Act of 2018 and the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 to maximize health care resource utilization and provide safe and convenient national health care to Veterans using telehealth. The finalization of this national telehealth authority also strengthens VA's role in supporting national and State responses to war, terrorism, national emergencies, and natural disasters.

- *Reproductive Health Services (2900-AS31).* VA proposed to reverse an unnecessary and unwise 2022 revision to the medical benefits package and reinstate the full exclusion of abortions and abortion counseling, restoring VA's medical benefits package to where it had been working effectively since it was first established in 1999. This rule was finalized in FY26.

Priority Regulatory Actions

VA is committed to maintaining a regulatory framework that ensures Veterans and their families timely receive all benefits, health care, and burial services guaranteed to them under law. To achieve this, VA continually reviews and updates its regulations, removing outdated rules and enhancing the clarity and efficiency of existing programs. This ongoing effort aligns with E.O. 14192, which guides agencies to fine-tune their regulatory agendas to address contemporary needs, ensure equity, and honor statutory and operational mandates. Among the key directives of Executive Order 14192 is the call for agencies to

enact deregulatory measures where feasible, particularly focusing on removing outdated, redundant, or unnecessarily onerous regulations.

In FY25, VA conducted a comprehensive review of its pending rulemaking actions. Upon completing this review, VA identified a total of 118 regulatory and deregulatory actions for inclusion in its FY26 agenda, an increase of 45 actions from the Spring 2025 agenda. The FY26 agenda includes pending actions from the FY25 agenda, previously removed actions, and newly created measures, all aligned with the current Administration's priorities, recent legislative changes, and program-level needs. These actions span all stages, including proposed rules, final rules, and long-term actions based on several criteria such as whether notice and comment is required prioritization of those with significant impacts on benefits delivery, deregulation, and those with statutory or legal deadlines.

VBA. VBA is advancing several deregulatory initiatives designed to streamline internal processes, eliminate obsolete programs, and clarify existing policies. Efforts include removing outdated adjudication regulations, eliminating redundant eligibility procedures, and refining claims processing guidelines. Such initiatives, which are not all listed in the priority regulations below, reflect the Administration's commitment to regulatory efficiency and responsiveness by improving benefits and insurance programs; enhancing access to legal, financial, and education services; and updating disability claims regulations. Concurrently, VBA is focused on targeted regulatory actions designed to overcome ongoing obstacles to accessing benefits, to make program requirements clearer, and to ensure that VBA policies are consistent with legislative directives. These actions draw on operational insights, feedback from stakeholders, and best practices learned over time.

VHA. VHA is committed to maintaining a regulatory framework that supports the delivery of high-quality, accessible, and equitable health care to Veterans and is advancing several deregulatory actions that streamline internal processes, rescind obsolete programs, and clarify existing authorities. These include actions such as rescinding regulations for discontinued grant programs, removing outdated provisions from legacy programs, and clarifying VA's authority to collect from third-party insurers. Such initiatives, which are not all listed in the priority regulations below, reflect the Department's broader commitment to regulatory efficiency and responsiveness. At the same time, VHA continues to pursue targeted regulatory actions that address persistent barriers to health care, to clarify program

requirements, and to align VHA policy with statutory authority. These actions are informed by operational experience, stakeholder input, and current practice.

VA's regulatory priority plan consists of eight priority regulations—five from VBA, two from VHA, and one from VA's Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction (OALC).

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