



## Legislation Text

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### Res. No. 391

Resolution calling upon the United States Congress to pass and the President to sign S.2413, The Restoring Veterans' Trust Act of 2014, a bill to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes.

By Council Members Ulrich, Barron, Chin, Eugene, Mendez, Van Bramer, Koslowitz and Rodriguez

Whereas, The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates that approximately 200,000 veterans reside in New York City; and

Whereas, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is a component of the VA that implements medical assistance programs through VA Medical Centers, VA Outpatient Clinics, VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics, and VA Community Living Centers throughout the country; and

Whereas, According to the VA, nearly 125,000 veterans are enrolled in New York City's VHA system; and

Whereas, In April of 2014, Cable News Network (CNN) first reported that a Phoenix based VHA facility manipulated patient appointment waiting times to cover up an excessive backlog of veterans awaiting medical treatment; and

Whereas, Since the Phoenix VHA allegations first emerged, whistleblowers from other VA facilities around the country alleged similar instances and schemes to conceal lengthy backlogs of veterans seeking care; and

Whereas, Accordingly, the VA Office of Inspector General (IG) launched an investigation of the Phoenix VHA for serious allegations of fraud, malfeasance, and mismanagement; and

Whereas, The investigation found that nearly 1,700 patients were left without care and that Phoenix VHA schedulers were instructed to falsify appointment dates to make patient waiting times for treatment appear shorter; and

Whereas, The VA IG described the manipulation of appointments and waitlists at the Phoenix VHA as a systemic problem, and consequently ordered a nationwide audit of all VHA facilities; and

Whereas, The nationwide audit reviewed waiting times and scheduling practices, and discovered that more than 100,000 veterans experienced delays of more than 90 days for appointments, and that roughly 60,000 veterans are waiting to schedule appointments as new patients; and

Whereas, The findings also revealed that over 70 percent of VHA employees reported that they were instructed to misrepresent appointment data and used alternative schedules to hide excessive waiting times; and

Whereas, These findings prompted widespread outrage from Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and other stakeholders demanding swift accountability and legislative action addressing access to care, the disability benefits backlog, and a range of other issues important to veterans; and

Whereas, In June 2014, United States Senator Bernard Sanders from Vermont introduced S.2413, The Restoring Veterans' Trust Act of 2014; and

Whereas, The Restoring Veterans' Trust Act of 2014 would immediately improve access to health care

and benefits by allowing veterans to seek hospital care, medical services, and other treatments through non-VA providers; and

Whereas, This legislation also contains important provisions that would bolster care and benefits to veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military, and for those who suffered significant spinal cord, reproductive, and urinary tract injuries; and

Whereas, Under this Act, the VA would be authorized to hire new doctors, nurses, and other health care personnel, and expand scholarship and loan repayment incentives to attract and retain talented health care professionals; and

Whereas, The bill would address accountability issues raised by VSOs to provide the VA Secretary with enhanced authority to immediately remove senior VA executives based on poor job performance; and

Whereas, Other provisions would restore full cost-of-living adjustments for all military retirement pensions, mandate that public universities provide in-state tuition rates to all veterans, and enhance the capacity of VA claim adjudication offices to reduce the benefits backlog; and

Whereas, The incident at the Phoenix and other VHA facilities raised serious concerns about the accessibility and integrity of the VHA health care system, mismanagement, and other issues critically important to veterans and their families; and

Whereas, The Restoring Veterans' Trust Act of 2014 will ensure that veterans have easier access to care and other essential benefits that are made available to veterans; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Congress to pass and the President to sign S.2413, The Restoring Veterans' Trust Act of 2014, a bill to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes.

RJH  
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