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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R.

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To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to modernize digital identity proofing and authentication systems of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. LAWLER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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# A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to modernize digital identity proofing and authentication systems of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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 “Veterans Electronic  
5 Trust and Records Authentication Act” or the “VETRA  
6 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PRO-**  
2 **GRAM TO MODERNIZE DIGITAL IDENTITY**  
3 **PROOFING AND AUTHENTICATION SYSTEMS.**

4 (a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The Sec-  
5 retary of Veterans Affairs shall, in accordance with chap-  
6 ter 57 of title 38, United States Code, carry out a pilot  
7 program to modernize digital identity proofing and au-  
8 thentication systems of the Department of Veterans Af-  
9 fairs. Under such pilot program, the Secretary shall be  
10 responsible for—

11 (1) replacing legacy knowledge-based or single-  
12 factor identity verification mechanisms with multi-  
13 layered, high-assurance digital identity solutions;

14 (2) reducing fraud and improper payments;

15 (3) improving secure access to digital service  
16 platforms of the Department for veterans and other  
17 individuals eligible for benefits under laws adminis-  
18 tered by the Secretary; and

19 (4) assessing cost savings and operational effi-  
20 ciencies before carrying out a full-scale deployment  
21 of any digital identity solution developed pursuant to  
22 the pilot program.

23 (b) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select, for par-  
24 ticipation in the pilot program, not more than three high-  
25 volume digital service platforms of the Department, each

1 of which may consist of one or more underlying systems,  
2 applications, or services, including—

- 3 (1) disability compensation claims system;
- 4 (2) veterans health care enrollment portal;
- 5 (3) the system to administer educational bene-  
6 fits; or
- 7 (4) the system to administer home loan bene-  
8 fits.

9 (c) RISK-TIERED IMPLEMENTATION.—As part of the  
10 pilot, the Secretary shall—

11 (1) map categories of digital transactions within  
12 participating platforms to graduated levels of iden-  
13 tity assurance based on—

- 14 (A) transaction sensitivity;
- 15 (B) fraud risk; and
- 16 (C) potential harm;

17 (2) implement adaptive authentication mecha-  
18 nisms capable of adjusting authentication require-  
19 ments based on contextual and behavioral risk sig-  
20 nals; and

21 (3) ensure, to the extent practicable under ap-  
22 plicable Federal standards, more rigorous authen-  
23 tication requirements are applied only where war-  
24 ranted by risk.

1 (d) STANDARDS FOR DIGITAL IDENTITY SOLU-  
2 TIONS.—Any digital identity solution implemented pursu-  
3 ant to the pilot program shall—

4 (1) be commercially available and may not be  
5 developed exclusively for use by the Department;

6 (2) be independently certified to meet or exceed  
7 Identity Assurance Level 2 (IAL2), as defined in  
8 National Institute of Standards and Technology  
9 Special Publication 800–63 (or any successor docu-  
10 ment);

11 (3) incorporate multi-factor authentication con-  
12 sistent with Authentication Assurance Level 2  
13 (AAL2), as defined in NIST SP 800–63 (or any  
14 successor document), or higher; and

15 (4) comply with applicable Federal cybersecu-  
16 rity and privacy requirements, including—

17 (A) chapter 57 of title 38, United States  
18 Code;

19 (B) the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C.  
20 522a); and

21 (C) the Federal Information Security Mod-  
22 ernization Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–283).

23 (e) FUNDING.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—Of amounts authorized to be  
25 appropriated for Information Technology Systems

1 under chapter 57 of title 38, United States Code,  
2 the Secretary may obligate or expend not more than  
3 \$25,000,000, in the aggregate, may be obligated to  
4 carry out the pilot program.

5 (2) NO ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZATION.—No ad-  
6 ditional funds are authorized to be appropriated to  
7 carry out this section.

8 (f) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

9 (1) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—Not later than  
10 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,  
11 the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on  
12 Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives  
13 and the Senate a plan for implementing the pilot  
14 program under this section.

15 (2) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than one year  
16 after the date on which the Secretary commences the  
17 pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to such  
18 committees an interim performance report that in-  
19 cludes—

20 (A) a summary of—

21 (i) identity proofing completion rates;

22 (ii) successful authentication rates;

23 (iii) successful account recovery rates;

24 and

1 (iv) abandonment rates during proof-  
2 ing, authentication, and recovery  
3 workflows, for each participating digital  
4 service platform, compared to the baseline  
5 rates in effect before commencement of the  
6 pilot program;

7 (B) fraud reduction metrics applicable to  
8 the digital service platforms of the Department  
9 selected for participation in the pilot program;

10 (C) an assessment of the extent to which  
11 the pilot program has resulted in decreased  
12 overall costs to the Department; and

13 (D) cybersecurity performance indicators.

14 (3) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days  
15 before the date specified in subsection (i)(1), the  
16 Secretary shall submit to such committees a final re-  
17 port that includes—

18 (A) a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot  
19 program; and

20 (B) legislative recommendations with re-  
21 spect to modernizing digital identity and au-  
22 thentication systems of the Department.

23 (g) GAO EVALUATION AND REPORT.—Not later than  
24 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act,  
25 the Comptroller General of the United States shall carry

1 out an independent evaluation of the pilot program under  
2 this section and submit to the Committees on Veterans'  
3 Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate  
4 a report that includes the findings of such evaluation.  
5 Such report shall include the following:

6 (1) An assessment of—

7 (A) the extent to which the pilot program  
8 successfully implemented identity proofing and  
9 authentication mechanisms that meet or exceed  
10 Identity Assurance Level 2 (IAL2) and Authen-  
11 tication Assurance Level 2 (AAL2) standards  
12 under National Institute of Standards and  
13 Technology Special Publication 800–63 (or any  
14 successor document);

15 (B) the degree to which the pilot program  
16 reduced identity-related fraud, improper pay-  
17 ments, or unauthorized account access across  
18 participating digital service platforms;

19 (C) the effect of the pilot program on vet-  
20 eran access to such digital service platforms, in-  
21 cluding effects on—

22 (i) authentication success rates;

23 (ii) account recovery and support re-  
24 quests; and

25 (iii) barriers to access for veterans—

1 (I) residing in rural areas;

2 (II) with disabilities; or

3 (III) with limited digital literacy;

4 (D) costs associated with implementation  
5 of the pilot program compared with the finan-  
6 cial benefits to the Department derived from  
7 fraud reduction, administrative efficiencies, and  
8 avoided improper payments;

9 (E) the extent to which the digital identity  
10 solutions used in the pilot program complied  
11 with applicable Federal cybersecurity and pri-  
12 vacy requirements;

13 (F) the extent to which the Department  
14 successfully implemented risk-tiered authentica-  
15 tion approaches that adjust identity verification  
16 requirements based on transaction sensitivity  
17 and fraud risk; and

18 (G) the feasibility of scaling the pilot pro-  
19 gram across additional digital service platforms  
20 of the Department, including compatibility with  
21 existing Department identity infrastructure and  
22 potential integration with Government-wide  
23 identity verification services.

1           (2) Recommendations of the Comptroller Gen-  
2           eral with respect to whether the pilot program  
3           should be—

4                   (A) expanded to additional digital service  
5           platforms of the Department;

6                   (B) modified to address operational or cy-  
7           bersecurity risks; or

8                   (C) discontinued.

9           (h) AUTHORIZATION PERIOD.—

10                   (1) TERMINATION DATE.—The authority of the  
11           Secretary to carry out the pilot program under this  
12           section shall terminate on the date that is two years  
13           after the date of the enactment of this Act.

14                   (2) NO PRESUMPTION OF CONTINUATION.—The  
15           Secretary may not be expand the scope or funding  
16           cap beyond the levels described in this section unless  
17           expressly authorized by a subsequent Act of Con-  
18           gress.