

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To direct a physician or nurse practitioner employed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certify the death of a veteran not later than 48 hours after such physician or nurse practitioner learns of such death, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself and Ms. HASSAN) introduced the following bill;  
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

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**A BILL**

To direct a physician or nurse practitioner employed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certify the death of a veteran not later than 48 hours after such physician or nurse practitioner learns of such death, 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 “Veteran Burial Timeli-  
5 ness and Death Certificate Accountability Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1           (1) States and counties have reported signifi-  
2           cant delays in the signing of death certificates for  
3           veterans who pass away from natural causes.

4           (2) Such delays, caused by the refusal of, or  
5           postponement by, physicians of the Department of  
6           Veterans Affairs have, in some cases, lasted as long  
7           as eight weeks.

8           (3) Such delays prevent the timely burial of de-  
9           ceased veterans and access to survivor benefits.

10 **SEC. 3. TIMELY CERTIFICATION OF THE DEATH OF A VET-**  
11 **ERAN.**

12           (a) IN GENERAL.—

13           (1) VA PHYSICIAN OR NURSE PRACTITIONER.—  
14           Subject to paragraph (2), a physician or nurse prac-  
15           titioner employed by the Secretary of Veterans Af-  
16           fairs who is the primary care provider of a veteran  
17           who dies of natural causes shall certify the death of  
18           such veteran not later than 48 hours after such phy-  
19           sician or nurse practitioner learns of such death.

20           (2) CORONER OR MEDICAL EXAMINER.—If a  
21           physician or nurse practitioner described in para-  
22           graph (1) cannot comply with such paragraph with  
23           respect to a death described in such paragraph, a  
24           coroner or medical examiner in the jurisdiction  
25           where such death occurred may certify such death.

1 (b) REPORT.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year  
3 after the date of the enactment of this Act, and an-  
4 nually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the  
5 Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and  
6 the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of  
7 Representatives a report regarding compliance with  
8 subsection (a).

9 (2) ELEMENTS.—Each report required under  
10 paragraph (1) shall include, with respect to the year  
11 preceding the date of the report, the following ele-  
12 ments:

13 (A) The percentage of cases in which a  
14 physician or nurse practitioner employed by the  
15 Secretary complied with subsection (a)(1).

16 (B) The number of cases in which such a  
17 physician or nurse practitioner could not so  
18 comply.

19 (C) An identification of the most common  
20 reasons why such a physician or nurse practi-  
21 tioner could not so comply.

22 (c) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act  
23 shall require any employee of the Department of Veterans  
24 Affairs, including a physician or nurse practitioner, to  
25 take an action not in compliance with the laws, regula-

1 tions, or requirements of the appropriate jurisdiction in  
2 which the employee is licensed or practicing, or in which  
3 a death may need to be certified.