

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 3257

To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend to Black veterans of World War II, and surviving spouses and certain direct descendants of such veterans, eligibility for certain housing loans and educational assistance administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 8, 2023

Mr. WARNOCK (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. BOOKER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend to Black veterans of World War II, and surviving spouses and certain direct descendants of such veterans, eligibility for certain housing loans and educational assistance administered by the Secretary 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Sgt. Isaac Woodard,
3 Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act
4 of 2023”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 Congress finds the following:

7 (1) African Americans played a pivotal role in
8 the war effort during World War II, with more than
9 1,200,000 African Americans serving in the Armed
10 Forces, and, by 1945, approximately 1.9 percent of
11 all officers in the Armed Forces were African Ameri-
12 cans.

13 (2) Following World War II, the Servicemen’s
14 Readjustment Act of 1944 (58 Stat. 284, commonly
15 known as the “GI Bill”) offered substantial material
16 benefits to approximately 16,000,000 veterans to as-
17 sist them in reintegrating into civil society.

18 (3) The GI Bill offered a range of economic and
19 educational benefits administered by the Federal
20 Government through the Secretary of the Veterans
21 Administration, including monetary assistance to ac-
22 cess higher education, government guarantees for
23 housing loans, unemployment allowances, and civil-
24 ian workforce reentry assistance.

25 (4) Though the legislative text of the GI Bill
26 was race neutral, the administration of benefits

1 through national, State, and local offices of the Vet-
2 erans Administration resulted in a pattern of dis-
3 crimination against racial minorities, especially Afri-
4 can Americans.

5 (5) Veterans Administration benefits counselors
6 denied African Americans access to educational ben-
7 efits at certain universities and funneled applicants
8 into industrial and vocational schools rather than
9 higher education opportunities, with just 6 percent
10 of African-American veterans of World War II earn-
11 ing a college degree, compared to 19 percent of
12 White veterans of World War II.

13 (6) In administering its housing guaranty pro-
14 gram, the Veterans Administration adopted the ra-
15 cial exclusion programs of the Federal Housing Ad-
16 ministration, also known as redlining, which ex-
17 cluded a significant number of African Americans
18 from taking full advantage of the housing guaranty
19 program.

20 (7) The GI Bill created substantial economic
21 growth and wealth accumulation for those who could
22 benefit, but discriminatory administration of the
23 program prevented many African-American veterans
24 of World War II from enjoying the full economic
25 prosperity of the post-war period.

1 **SEC. 3. HOUSING LOANS GUARANTEED BY THE SECRETARY**
2 **OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR BLACK VET-**
3 **ERANS OF WORLD WAR II AND SURVIVORS**
4 **AND CERTAIN DIRECT DESCENDANTS OF**
5 **SUCH VETERANS.**

6 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

7 (1) DEFINITION.—Section 3701(b) of title 38,
8 United States Code, is amended by adding at the
9 end the following new paragraphs:

10 “(8) The term ‘veteran’ also includes an indi-
11 vidual who—

12 “(A) is Black;

13 “(B) served on active duty as a member of
14 the Armed Forces during World War II; and

15 “(C) certifies to the Secretary that such
16 individual was denied a specific benefit under
17 the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (58
18 Stat. 284) on the basis of race.

19 “(9) The term ‘veteran’ also includes an indi-
20 vidual who—

21 “(A) is the surviving spouse, child, grand-
22 child, or other direct descendant of a veteran
23 described in paragraph (8);

24 “(B) certifies to the Secretary that such
25 veteran described in paragraph (8) was denied
26 a specific benefit under the Servicemen’s Read-

1 justment Act of 1944 (58 Stat. 284) on the
2 basis of race; and

3 “(C) is living on the date of the enactment
4 of the Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph
5 H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023.”.

6 (2) BASIC ENTITLEMENT.—Section
7 3702(a)(2)(E) of such title is amended by adding at
8 the end the following new subparagraph:

9 “(H) Each individual—

10 “(i) described in paragraph (8) or (9) of
11 section 3701(b) of this title; and

12 “(ii) who applies for a housing loan during
13 the five-year period beginning on the date of
14 the enactment of the Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr.
15 and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration
16 Act of 2023.”.

17 (b) DEADLINE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
18 shall carry out the amendments made by this section not
19 later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this
20 Act.

21 (c) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
22 fairs shall prescribe regulations to carry out the amend-
23 ments made by this section.

24 (d) GAO REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
25 deadline under subsection (b), the Comptroller General of

1 the United States shall submit to Congress a report re-
2 garding—

3 (1) the number of individuals who received
4 housing loan benefits pursuant to the amendments
5 made by this section; and

6 (2) the total value of housing loan benefits ad-
7 ministered by the Secretary pursuant to the amend-
8 ments made by this section.

9 **SEC. 4. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR SURVIVORS AND**
10 **CERTAIN DIRECT DESCENDANTS OF BLACK**
11 **VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II.**

12 (a) ENTITLEMENT.—Subsection (b) of section 3311
13 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at
14 the end the following new paragraph:

15 “(12) An individual—

16 “(A) described in section 3701(b)(9) of
17 this title; and

18 “(B) who applies for educational assistance
19 under this chapter during the five-year period
20 beginning on the date of the enactment of the
21 Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H.
22 Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2023.”.

23 (b) DEADLINE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
24 shall carry out the amendment made by this section not

1 later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this
2 Act.

3 (c) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
4 fairs shall prescribe regulations to carry out the amend-
5 ment made by this section.

6 (d) GAO REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
7 deadline under subsection (b), the Comptroller General of
8 the United States shall submit to Congress a report re-
9 garding—

10 (1) the number of individuals who received edu-
11 cational assistance pursuant to the amendment
12 made by this section; and

13 (2) the total amount of educational assistance
14 paid by the Secretary pursuant to the amendment
15 made by this section.

16 **SEC. 5. BLUE RIBBON PANEL ON BENEFITS AND ASSIST-**
17 **ANCE FOR FEMALE AND MINORITY VET-**
18 **ERANS.**

19 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 30 days after
20 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
21 Veterans Affairs shall, pursuant to chapter 10 of title 5,
22 United States Code (commonly referred to as the “Federal
23 Advisory Committee Act”), appoint a panel of independent
24 experts on—

1 (1) inequities in the distribution of benefits and
2 assistance administered by the Secretary; and

3 (2) military service by female and minority
4 members of the Armed Forces.

5 (b) DUTIES.—The panel required to be appointed
6 under subsection (a) shall develop recommendations re-
7 garding additional benefits and assistance for individuals
8 described in paragraph (2) of such subsection, and related
9 legislation.

10 (c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
11 of the enactment of this Act, the panel required to be ap-
12 pointed under subsection (a) shall submit to Congress and
13 the President a report containing the recommendations
14 developed under this section.

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