



IMPROVE Transition for Servicemembers Act – Summary

Background

For those who have served our nation in uniform, transitioning out of the military back into the civilian world can be a stressful and uncertain time. Congress and the executive branch have taken action in recent years to institute programs of counseling, training, and assistance to help separating servicemembers prepare for and adapt to new lives in the civilian world. This assistance at the federal level is provided through the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) administered by the Department of Defense (DoD) in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Labor (DOL) and Small Business Administration (SBA). Through TAP, servicemembers receive training in how to apply for jobs, start a business, pursue education, access veterans benefits, and other aspects of their civilian lives. Under current law, all servicemembers (including the Coast Guard) are required to go through TAP before separating or retiring.

While a series of reforms has been made to TAP over the years, government studies and surveys of veterans indicate there is still room for improvement. The Improving Preparation and Resources for Occupational, Vocational, and Educational (IMPROVE) Transition for Servicemembers Act proposes several reforms to TAP based on this feedback with the goal of increasing utilization of TAP, improving federal and local coordination of services, and making transition counseling and services more adaptable to servicemembers' individual needs and circumstances.

IMPROVE Transition for Servicemembers Act

- Consolidates 10 USC 1142 and 1144, which authorizes TAP, into one new section;
- Establishes completion deadlines for TAP to ensure servicemembers are able to fully absorb TAP information and access additional resources before they separate;
- Allows online TAP training in lieu of in-person training only with a waiver and in the event of urgent mission requirements or an unanticipated separation;
- Makes currently optional, 2-day specialized courses in entrepreneurship, career technical training, and higher education, with the addition of advanced employment assistance, part of the mandatory TAP curriculum in order to boost participation in and access to those courses;
- Directs DoD and VA to enter into MOUs with State veterans services agencies to facilitate connections between transitioning servicemembers and organizations in the communities where they are relocating that provide transition assistance services;
- Requires a ratio of at least one full-time or full-time equivalent TAP employee per 250 transitioning members and their spouses at an installation to ensure enough full-time personnel are available to meet servicemembers' needs during transition;
- Directs the creation of an electronic database to track individual participation in TAP and an online portal for servicemembers to access personal information and resources related to their transition;
- Establishes post-TAP and post-transition surveys to assess short-term satisfaction and long-term outcomes of servicemembers' TAP experience;
- Incorporates support for TAP and other transition-related programs into DoD command climate assessments and requires new commanders receive education about transition and career-related programs unique to their installations to improve command support for transition;
- Directs GAO to conduct a study of participation rates and access to transition assistance at small and remote bases to assess any disparity in resources and access compared to larger bases;
- Ensures servicemembers receive regular information at different touchpoints in their careers on career readiness, professional development, and transition-related programs available to them during their service as part of their Military Life Cycle.