

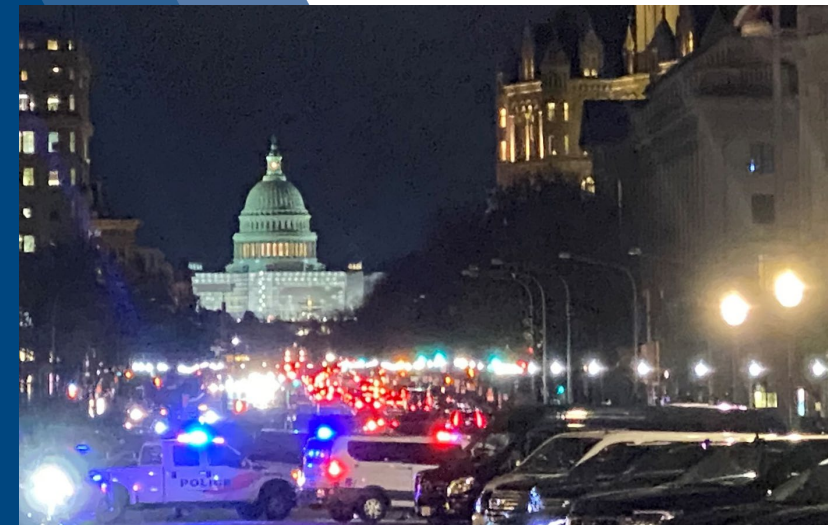
VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Getting Started with Congressionally Mandated Implementation and Evaluation Projects

*Things you wanted to know about policy and
legislation but didn't know where to start*



Objectives

Why A Civics Lesson?

Relevance of legislation to VA and HSR&D/QUERI investigators



The Civics Lesson

- How a bill becomes a law
- How to find it
- How to read it
- How to think about it



The Tools of the Trade: Congressionally Mandated Projects, Evaluations, and Reports

- How to prepare an Executive Summary
- How to prepare a Policy Brief
- How to prepare an Evaluation Design
- How to prepare an Implementation Plan/Proposal
- How to prepare a Congressionally Mandated Report

Why A Civics Lesson?

Why A Civics Lesson?

- Congress holds the power and the purse strings for the entire federal government.
- VAs ability to provide healthcare, benefits, and internment services is derived from federal law.
- Our research and evaluation work needs to have real-world impact.

TITLE V—RESEARCH

SEC. 501. VETERANS INTEGRATION TO ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership program of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The report shall include the following:

(1) The number of medical centers of the Department, institutions of higher learning, non-college degree programs, and student veterans supported by the program, and relevant trends since the program began.

(2) The staff and resources allocated to the program, and relevant trends since the program began.

(3) An assessment of the outcomes and effectiveness of the program.

Public Law 115–435
115th Congress

An Act

To amend titles 5 and 44, United States Code, to require Federal evaluation activities, improve Federal data management, and for other purposes.

Jan. 14, 2019
[H.R. 4174]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

3

1 borne Hazards Exposures in the Southwest Asia
2 Theater of Military Operations” concludes that the
3 available evidence does not allow a definitive deter-
4 mination to be made about any potential association
5 between airborne hazards in the theater and numer-
6 ous respiratory health outcomes. The report charac-
7 terizes existing research as inadequate, and advises
8 that additional research be done, including longitu-
9 dinal studies that by design take years.

10 (5) In the interim, though, some veterans have
11 already been adversely affected by their exposure to
12 burn pits, and their claims to certain benefits fur-

Foundations for
Evidence-Based
Policymaking Act
of 2018.
5 USC 101 note.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Relevance of Legislation to VA and HSR&D/QUERI Investigators

PUBLIC LAW 116-171—OCT. 17, 2020 134 STAT. 791

the Secretary shall seek to enter into a contract with an appropriate entity described in paragraph (3) to conduct a study of the grant program.

(B) ELEMENTS OF STUDY.—In conducting the study under subparagraph (A), the appropriate entity shall—

(i) evaluate the effectiveness of the grant program Evaluation.
under this section in—

(I) addressing the factors that contribute to suicides;

(II) increasing the use of suicide prevention services;

(III) reducing mood-related symptoms that increase suicide and suicide risk; and

(IV) where such information is available due to the time frame of the grant program, reducing suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, self-harm, and deaths by suicide; and

(V) reducing suicidal ideation, suicide

National Defense Authorization Act & Budget Acts annually provide appropriations for VA programs (*no \$ for new mandated programs without appropriations*)

VA policy and evaluation priorities are now shaped by the Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act).

Bills drive new mandated programs/initiatives VA has to implement, evaluate and report on. This may require:

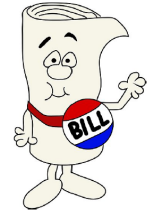
- Congressionally Mandated Reports – when legislation requires VA to report on a specific program, subject area of interest
- Clinical or operational partners tasked with legislative priorities
- HSR&D/QUERI investigators involvement in the implementation and evaluation



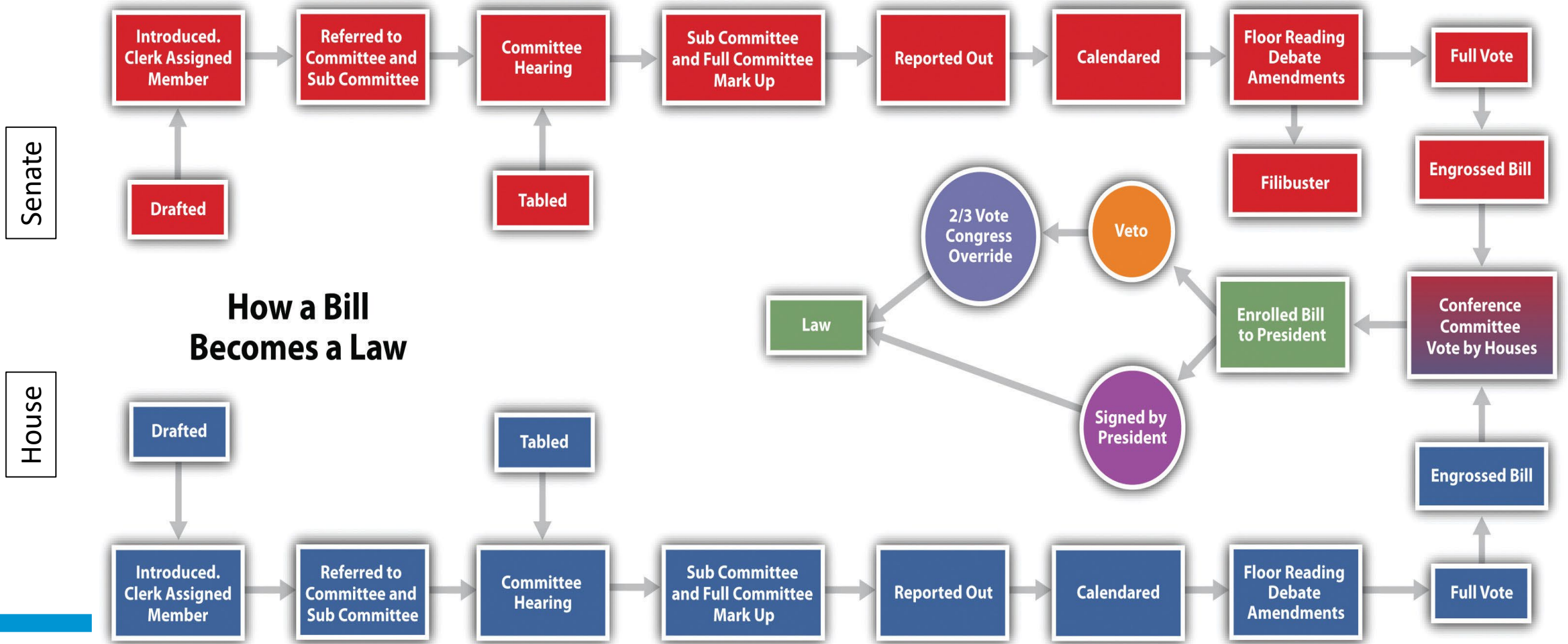
The Civics Lesson

How A Bill Becomes A Law

<https://youtu.be/OgVKvqTltto>

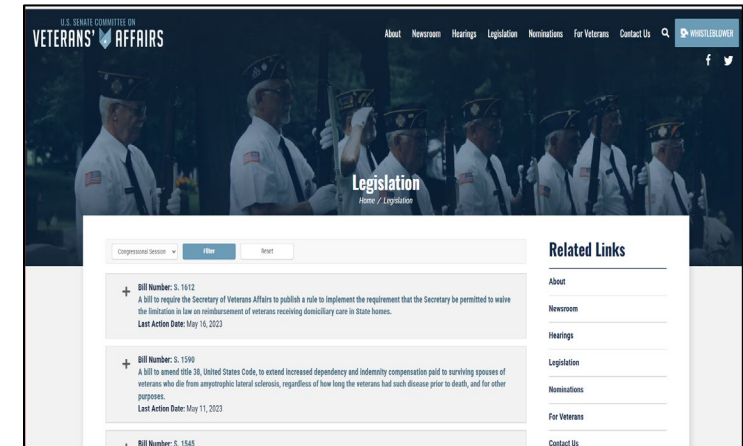


Legislative Process: How A Bill Becomes A Law



House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees

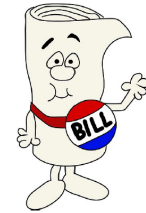
- House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees (HVAC/SVAC) are often the originators of research related legislation
- Their websites are a source of information about proposed legislation that could potentially impact proposed/on-going research and evaluation projects



<https://www.veterans.senate.gov/>



<https://veterans.house.gov/>



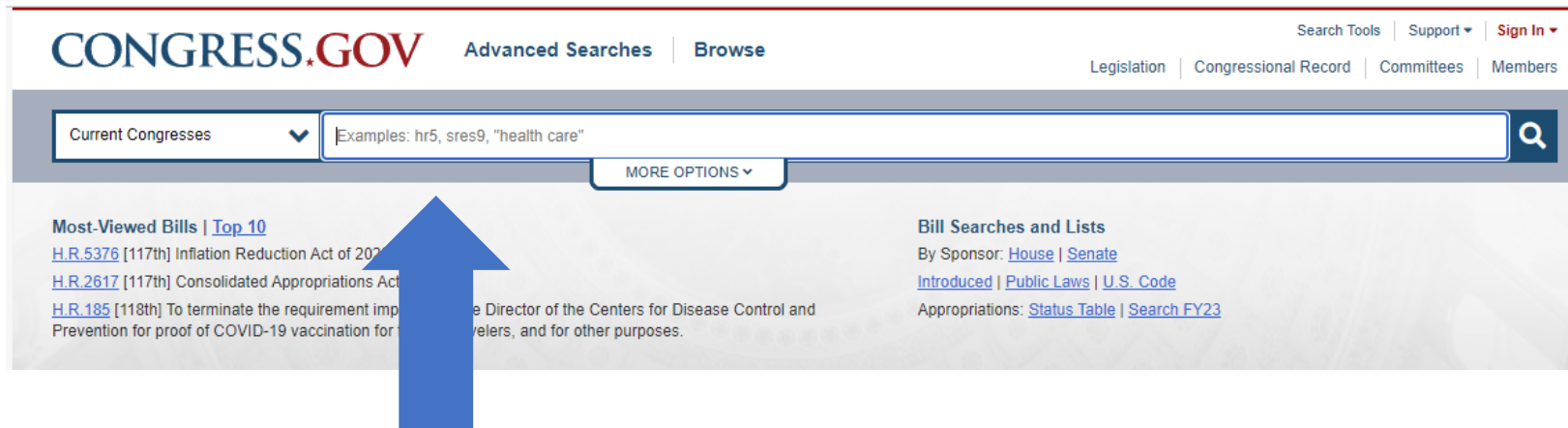
Where To Find A Copy Of The Legislation

<https://www.congress.gov>

- One stop shop for:
 - Bill information
 - Federal Laws dating back to 1799
(Note: the default is set for 1973 to present)
 - Legislative Publications, such as Committee Reports
 - Other legislative resources

The screenshot shows the CONGRESS.GOV website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with a dropdown menu for 'Current Congresses' and a search input field containing 'Examples: hr5, sres9, "health care"'. Below the search bar, there are several sections: 'Current Legislative Activities' for the 118th Congress (2023-2024), which includes 'House of Representatives' and 'Senate' sections with 'Not in Session Video Archive' buttons and meeting information; 'House Links' and 'Senate Links' with various sub-links; 'Upcoming House and Senate Committee Meetings' with dates and times; 'Recent' news items; 'The Congressional Record'; 'Library of Congress Reports'; and 'The Constitution Annotated'. On the right side, there is a 'Contact Your Member' section with a search box and a 'News from the Law Library' section with a recent alert from February 22, 2023.

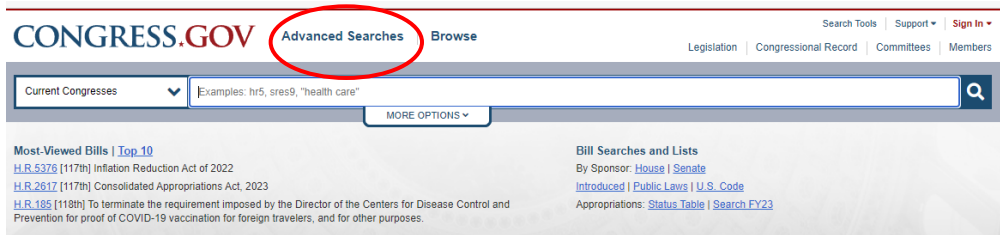
How To Look Up Legislation



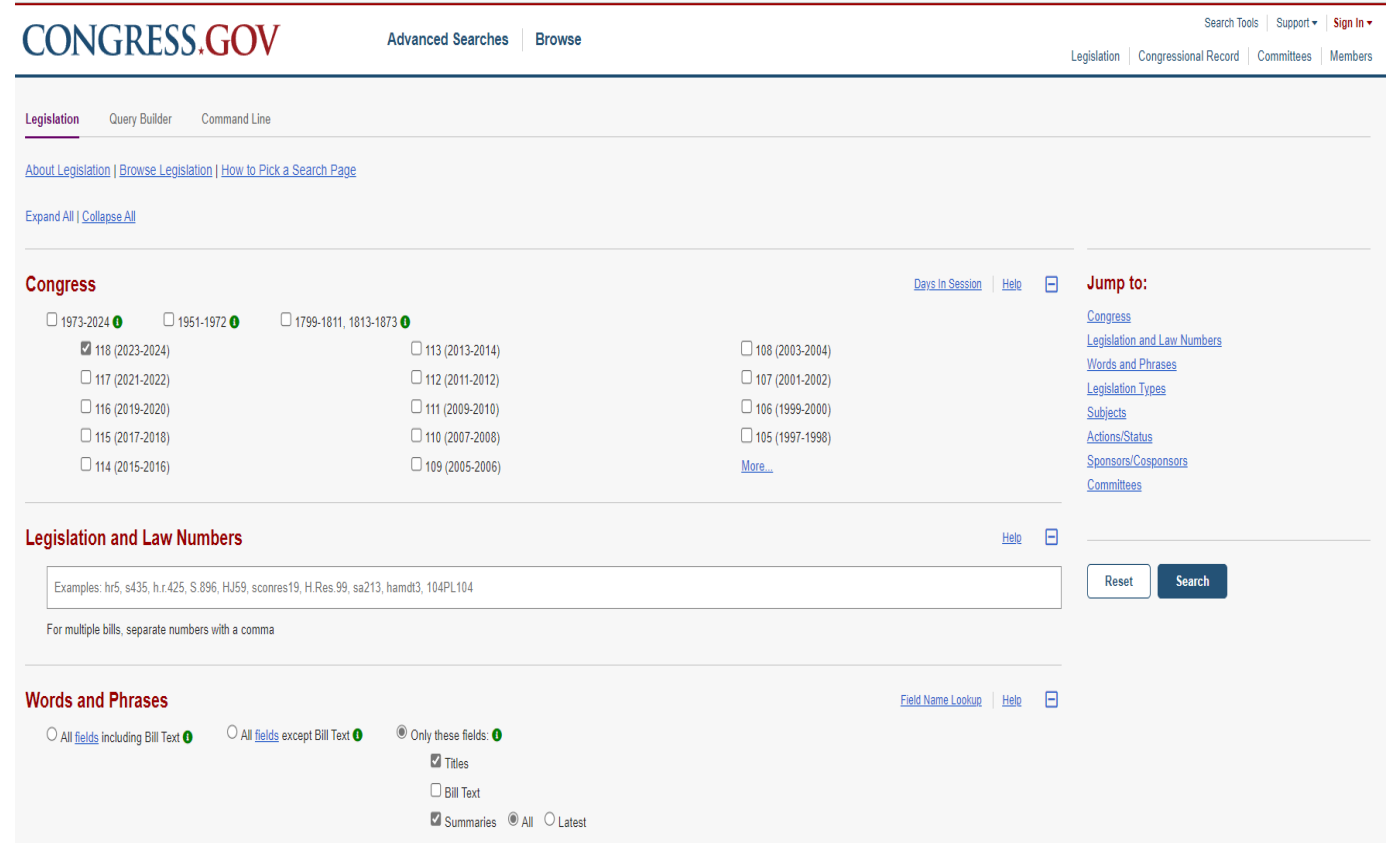
On the homepage in the search box, you can enter:

- Bill number, i.e., Public Law (PLAW) 117-37;
- Bill name, i.e., Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act;
- Or a broad search term such as Veteran health care.

Advanced Search Options



- Similar process to literature searches for research articles
- Key words and Boolean logic (e.g., AND/OR)



Search Results

All Congresses Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act

Home > Legislation > 117th Congress > H.R. 1448

6 OF 15 RESULTS

H.R.1448 - PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act

117th Congress (2021-2022)

LAW Hide Overview ✕

Sponsor: [Rep. Stivers, Steve \(R-OH-15\)](#) introduced 03/01/2021

Committees: House - [Veterans Affairs](#) | Senate - [Veterans Affairs](#)

Committee Reports: [H. Rept. 117-31](#)

Latest Action: 08/25/2021 Became [Public Law No. 117-37](#). (All Actions)

Tracker: [Introduced](#) > [Passed House](#) > [Passed Senate](#) > [To President](#) > **[Became Law](#)**

More on This Bill
[Constitutional Authority Statements](#)
[CBO Cost Estimates \(1\)](#)

Subject — Policy Area:
Armed Forces and National Security
[View subjects >>](#)

Summary (4) Text (6) Actions (23) Titles (12) Amendments (0) Cosponsors (317) **Committees (2)** Related Bills (2)

Summary: H.R.1448 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) [All Information](#) (Except Text)

[Listen](#)

There are 4 summaries for H.R. 1448. [Public Law \(08/25/2021\)](#) [Bill summaries](#) are authored by [CRS](#).

Shown Here:
Public Law No: 117-37 (08/25/2021)
[Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act](#) or the [PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act](#)

This bill implements a program and a policy related to service dog [therapy for veterans](#). Specifically, the bill requires the Department of [Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) to implement a five-year pilot program to provide canine training to eligible [veterans](#) diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder as an element of a complementary and integrative health program. Eligible [veterans](#) are those who are enrolled in the VA health care system and have been recommended [for](#) participation by a qualified mental health care provider or clinical team.

Sponsor(s): The member(s) who first introduced the Bill.

Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Cost Estimate: How much funding has been authorized.

Latest Action: The status of the bill and the date it became a law.

Committees: Which committees were involved in writing the bill and who will be expecting a report.

Tips For Downloading Legislation

- While the Legislative Counsel summary is helpful, be sure to read the actual bill text carefully – the PDF version
- Have the latest version of the bill
- Review the committee analysis, if available for more context
- Check the history of the bill for additions, amendments or both

The screenshot shows the CONGRESS.GOV website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Advanced Searches' and 'Browse'. A search bar contains 'Suicide Prevention'. Below the search bar, the page title is 'S.928 - Not Just a Number Act' for the 118th Congress (2023-2024). A 'BILL' tab is active, showing the sponsor 'Sen. Tester, Jon [D-MT]' and the committee 'Senate - Veterans Affairs'. A progress tracker shows the bill has been 'Introduced', 'Passed Senate', and 'Passed House', and is currently 'To President'. Below the tracker, there are tabs for 'Summary (0)', 'Text (1)', 'Actions (1)', 'Titles (2)', 'Amendments (0)', 'Cosponsors (1)', 'Committees (1)', and 'Related Bills (0)'. The 'Text' tab is selected, showing the text 'S.928 — 118th Congress (2023-2024)'. A 'Listen' button is visible. A red circle highlights the text 'There is one version of the bill.' and a blue arrow points to the 'PDF (243KB)' download option. The page also includes a 'Citation' section with 'CBO Cost Estimates (0)' and 'Subject — Policy Area: Armed Forces and National Security'.

Reading A Bill

Law Number: Each Law is assigned a number for identification.

Public Law 117-37
117th Congress

Date the bill became law

An Act

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on dog training therapy, and to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide service dogs to veterans with mental illnesses who do not have mobility impairments.

Aug. 25, 2021
[H.R. 1448]

Short-overview of the bill's intent

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act” or the “PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act”.

Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act.
38 USC 101 note.

SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PROGRAM ON DOG TRAINING THERAPY.

38 USC 1714 note.

This paragraph will establish the “Deadline” for starting a project

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall commence the conduct of a pilot program to provide canine training to eligible veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder

Deadline.

Bill title

Key Questions To Reflect Upon After Reading

How does the policy operate?

How is it funded?

Who is responsible for administering the policy?

What are the objectives of the policy?

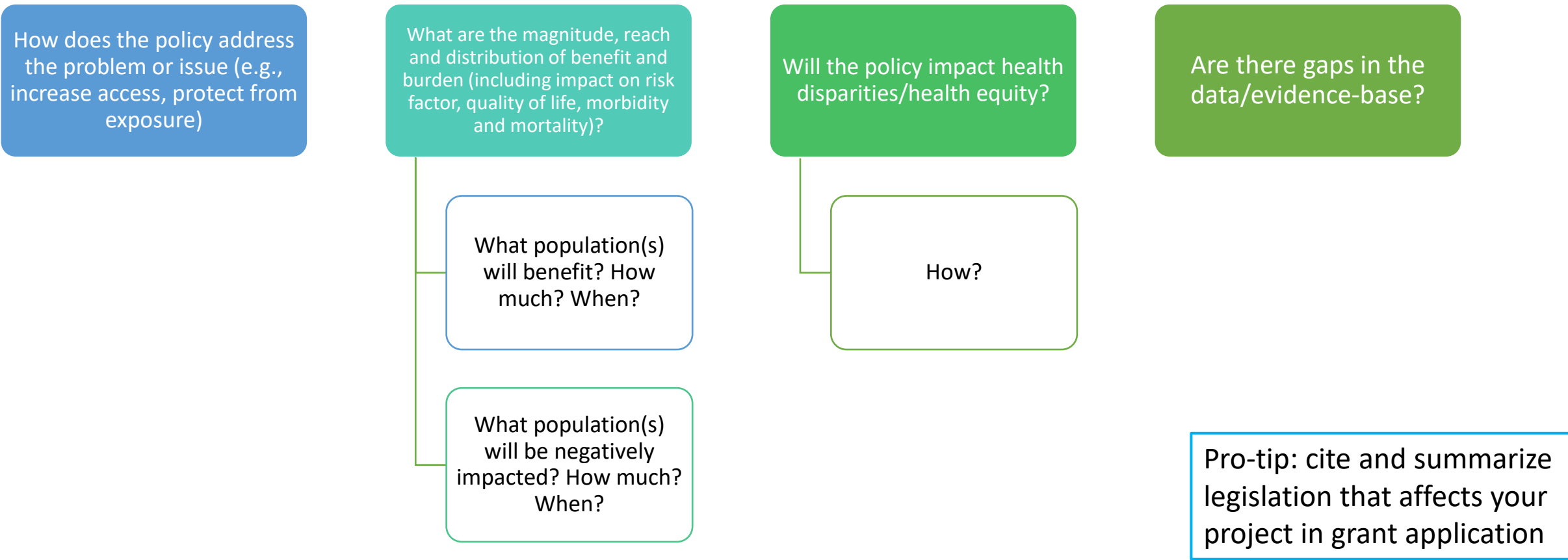
What is the value-added of the policy?

What are the expected short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes?

What might be the unintended positive and negative consequences of the policy?

Pro-tip: Policy = Legislation these terms are frequently used interchangeably

What is the Public Health Impact of the Policy?



Ok, I have the bill. What do I do next?

The Tools of the Trade: Congressionally Mandated Projects, Evaluations, and Reports

Prepare An Executive Summary

- **Add definition of what executive summary does**
 1. Start with a blank word document
 2. Find the legislative text, to include title and number, from Congress.gov (see slides 9-13) and download PDF
 3. Title your document with the Public Law number and section title - this will be your acronym
 4. Find and paste hyperlink to the legislation PDF in the header of the blank word document to refer back
 5. Outline the legislation - this is your mark up copy to make comments
 - Copy the relevant sections from the PDF version into a word document
 - Create a short outline of the major sections
 - Typically a 1 to 2-page document
 - High-level summary
 - Retain the legislation paragraph numbering in a longer section later
 - Make note of any timelines in the legislation
 - Legislation dictates timing of Congressional reports, project start/end dates

An Example Executive Summary

PL 115-435 Evidence Act
Executive Summary for RCS
Monica Matthieu, PhD., LCSW and David Adkins, MHA
January 6, 2020

PL 115-435 – Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018. This law has 4 sections organized as Titles and Sections. *Italics are author comments. Title 1 has the most relevance to RCS in that it outlines the requirements for the [Agency Evidence Plan](#) in conjunction with the [Strategic Plan](#).*

Title I: Federal Evidence-Building Activities.

- Sec. 101. Federal evidence-building activities will apply to the Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) in accordance with (IAW), section 311 (1) and 31 USC 901(b)(1)(O).
- **Sec 311. Definitions** - Various definitions offered. *One is relevant to RCS.*
 - “The term ‘evaluation’ means an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency.”
- **Sec 312: a. Requirements** - Requires the head of the VA to develop an “[Agency Evidence Plan](#)” which must include the following six elements:
 1. [A list of policy-relevant questions;](#)
 2. [A list of data that will be collected, used or acquired;](#)

Prepare A Policy Brief

- **A policy brief provides an overview of the policy and its goals for outlining details – NOT for submission**
- The length of the policy brief is dependent on the length of the legislative text
 - Typically, a 3- to 10-page document
 - Detailed summary
 - Team-based working document – not for submission but for outlining the details using comment boxes along with your operations partner(s)
- 1. Start with steps 1-4 of preparing an executive summary
- 2. *Introduction*: overview - could be a “copy and paste” from the legislation
- 3. *Key Points of the legislation*: overview of the major paragraphs contained in the legislative text i.e., Eligibility - Pursuant to this section, the Secretary shall—

(1) furnish emergent suicide care to an eligible individual at a medical facility of the Department; (2) pay for emergent suicide care provided to an eligible individual at a non-Department facility; and (3) reimburse an eligible individual for emergent suicide care provided to the eligible individual at a non-Department facility

Prepare A Policy Brief

3. *Implications:* what changes or actions need to be taken

- Is there a clear need for implementation and evaluation plans to be developed?
- Who will you need to partner with?
- Is there a timeline established for implementation or evaluation of the policy?

4. *Reporting Requirements*

- Does the legislation require a Congressionally Mandated Report (CMR)?
- If so, when are the CMRs due and does the legislation require more than one

(k) REPORTING.—

(1) INTERIM REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 18 months after the date on which the first grant is awarded under this section, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the provision of grants to eligible entities under this section.

(B) ELEMENTS.—The report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) An assessment of the effectiveness of the grant program under this section, including—

(I) the effectiveness of grant recipients and their community partners, if any, in conducting outreach to eligible individuals;

(II) the effectiveness of increasing eligible individuals engagement in suicide prevention services; and

(III) such other validated instruments and additional measures as determined by the Secretary and as described in subsection (h)(2).

(ii) A list of grant recipients and their partner organizations, if any, that delivered services funded by the grant and the amount of such grant received by each recipient and partner organization.

(iii) The number of eligible individuals supported by each grant recipient, including through services provided to family members, disaggregated by—

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than three years after the date on which the first grant is awarded under this section, and annually thereafter for each year in which the program is in effect, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress—

(A) a follow-up on the interim report submitted under paragraph (1) containing the elements set forth in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph; and

(B) a report on—

(i) the effectiveness of the provision of grants under this section, including the effectiveness of community partners in conducting outreach to eligible individuals and their families and reducing the rate of suicide among eligible individuals;

(ii) an assessment of the increased capacity of the Department to provide services to eligible individuals and their families, set forth by State, as a result of the provision of grants under this section;

(iii) the feasibility and advisability of extending or expanding the provision of grants consistent with this section; and

(iv) such other elements as considered appropriate by the Secretary.

(l) THIRD-PARTY ASSESSMENT.—

An Example Policy Brief

(ii) to eligible entities that can assist eligible individuals at risk of suicide who are not currently receiving health care furnished by the Department.

(C) **GEOGRAPHY.**—In distributing grants under this paragraph, the Secretary may provide grants to eligible entities that furnish services to eligible individuals and their families in geographically dispersed areas.

(2) **PREFERENCE.**—The Secretary shall give preference to eligible entities that have demonstrated the ability to provide or coordinate suicide prevention services.

(e) **REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIPT OF GRANTS.**—

(1) **NOTIFICATION THAT SERVICES ARE FROM DEPARTMENT.**— Each entity receiving a grant under this section to provide or coordinate suicide prevention services to eligible individuals and their families shall notify the recipients of such services that such services are being paid for, in whole or in part, by the Department.

(2) **DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN WITH ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILY.**—Any plan developed with respect to the provision of suicide prevention services for an eligible individual or their family shall be developed in consultation with the eligible individual and their family.

(3) **COORDINATION.**—An entity receiving a grant under this section shall—

(A) coordinate with the Secretary with respect to the provision of clinical services to eligible individuals in accordance with subsection (n) or any other provisions of the law regarding the delivery of health care by the Secretary;

(B) inform every veteran who receives assistance under this section from the entity of the ability of the veteran to apply for enrollment in the patient enrollment system

Hallows, Juliana Governor's and Mayor's Challenges, ▼

Hallows, Juliana Requirement for Grantees. NOFA?

Hallows, Juliana VA FTE would direct this coordination.

Hallows, Juliana NOFA, how will this be coordinated affd

Hallows, Juliana Consideration for Vera Capture and ▼

of the Department under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code; and
(C) if such a veteran wishes to so enroll, inform the veteran of a point of contact at the Department who can assist the veteran in such enrollment.

(4) **MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING.**—An entity receiving a grant under this section shall submit to the Secretary a description of such tools and assessments the entity uses or will use to determine the effectiveness of the services furnished by the entity, which shall include the measures developed under subsection (h)(2) and may include—

(A) the effect of the services furnished by the entity on the financial stability of the eligible individual;

(B) the effect of the services furnished by the entity on the mental health status, wellbeing, and suicide risk of the eligible individual; and

(C) the effect of the services furnished by the entity on the social support of the eligible individuals receiving those services.

(5) **REPORTS.**—The Secretary—

(A) shall require each entity receiving a grant under this section to submit to the Secretary an annual report that describes the projects carried out with such grant during the

Hallows, Juliana This is the Study Vehicle: Evaluation of

Hallows, Juliana SAMHSA Concurred they could?

Hallows, Juliana These metrics could be more process?

Hallows, Juliana Operational and define within the reg

Prepare An Evaluation Design

- **A grant-like process for a program that doesn't exist yet**
- Policy implementation and evaluation can have multiple aims or purposes, including:
 - Identifying critical differences between planned and actual implementation
 - Identifying barriers to and facilitators of implementation
 - Developing metrics for how the program will be evaluated
 - Collecting information to support interpretation of future evaluations of policy impact
 - Documenting the relationships between logic model components and external influences
 - Improving the implementation process
 - Informing future policy development

Section 201 Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox
Suicide Prevention Grant Program
Evaluation Plans

Prepared by:

Behavioral Health Quality Enhancement Research Initiative
Rapid Response Team

For:

Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention



January 24, 2022

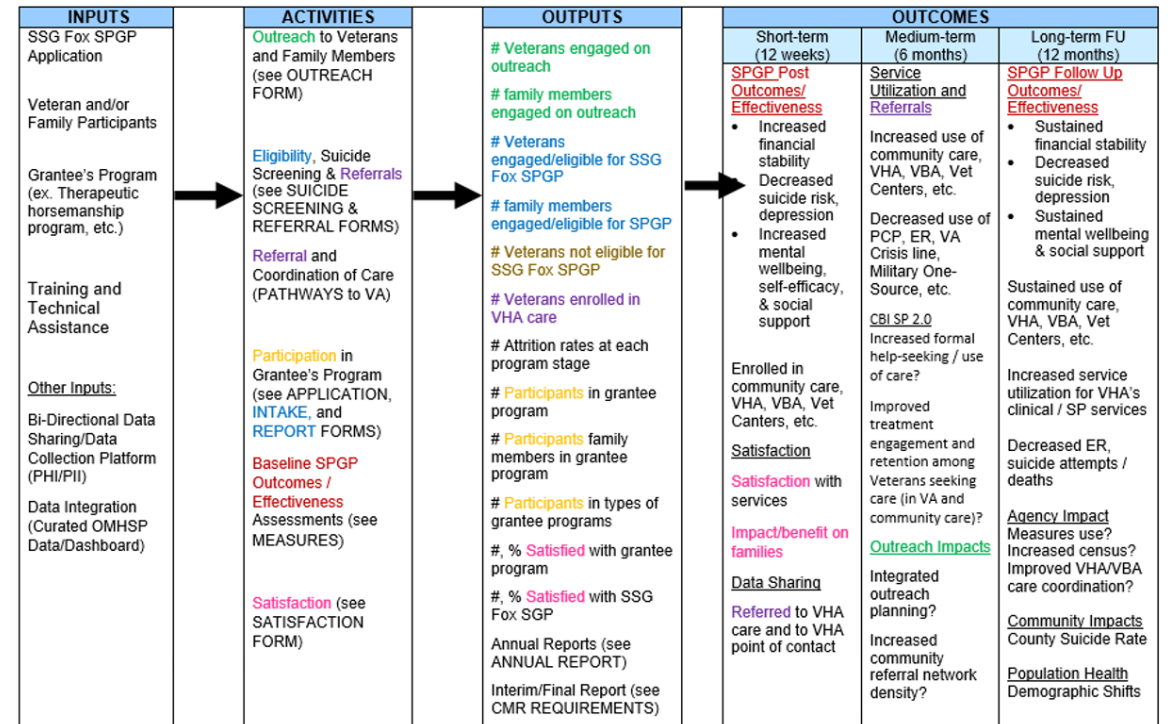
Version 5.0

How To Prepare An Evaluation Design

1. Identify the core components and activities of implementation for a specific policy.
2. Identify potential methods and indicators to assess whether or not each of the core components has been implemented.
3. Identify key stakeholders involved in the implementation of the evaluation. What is the optimal method for obtaining information from each of the stakeholders?
4. Identify the stakeholder responsible for monitoring implementation of the policy (if any) to find out if a process for tracking the implementation already exists or is under development

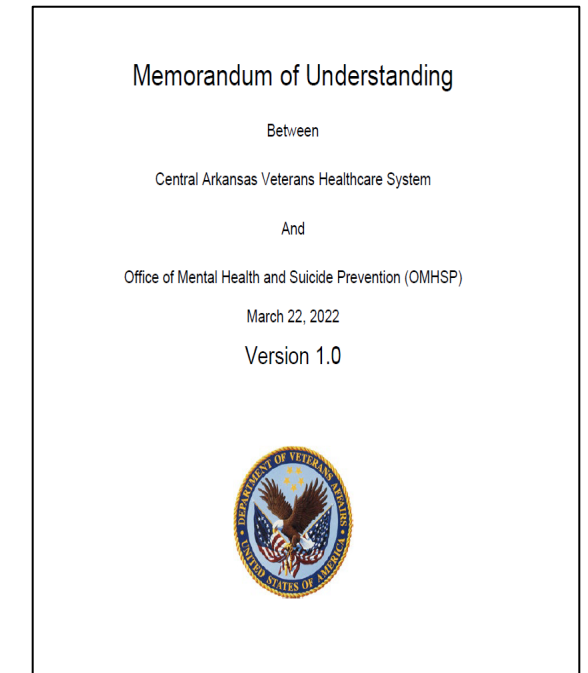
Develop Program Logic Models

- Policy implementation and evaluation may focus on a number of different areas, including
 - Components of the program
 - Use a logic model to outline inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes
 - Include stakeholder attitudes, knowledge, and awareness.
 - Consider facilitators of and barriers to implementation.



Prepare An Implementation Plan/ Memorandum Of Understanding

- Implementation Questions
 - Does the policy clearly identify the critical implementation steps?
 - Was the policy implemented according to the policy requirements?
 - What inputs and resources are required to implement the policy?
 - Are all of these inputs and resources available?
 - What key activities need to be completed during policy implementation?
 - Scope of Work – needed if you have a contractor assigned as part of the project



Develop A Congressionally Mandated Report

1. Copy and paste the legislation (*see slide 18*)
2. Outline what is specifically required to complete the CMR
3. Collect data needed to complete the CMR



Final Report on
VHA MISSION Act of 2018 Section 506
on
Establishment of Peer Specialists in
Patient Aligned Care Team Settings
Within VHA Medical Centers

September 25, 2020

Pro-tip: Co-write the CMR with your clinical and operational partners to contextualize and include recent policy drivers on the program – Peers in PACT, for example

Impacts

- Impacts for operational partner

HSR&D/QUERI Reporting of Impacts

- Pro-tip – turn products produced into citations
- Write blurb about citation – SSG Fox Report blurb for CeMHOR/QUERI

Resources

Videos on Congress.gov

The screenshot shows the Congress.gov website interface. At the top, there are search and navigation options. The main content area features a video player titled "The Legislative Process: Overview (Video)". To the right of the video player is a table of contents with the following sections and lengths:

Section	Length
1. Overview of the Legislative Process	5:00
2. Introduction and Referral of Bills	3:19
3. Committee Consideration	3:39
4. Calendar and Scheduling	2:36
5. House Floor	3:53
6. Senate Floor	4:17
7. Executive Business in the Senate	1:59
8. Resolving Differences	3:29
9. Presidential Action	1:58

Below the video player, there is a transcript section titled "Overview of the Legislative Process (Transcript)". To the right of the transcript is a "Diagram of the Legislative Process" which is a circular flowchart showing the steps from bill introduction to presidential action.

<https://www.congress.gov/legislative-process>

PEPREC Evidence Act Checklist

The screenshot shows the "USE OF THE STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE CHECKLIST" document. It includes an introduction section and a "Strength of Evidence Checklist" table. The table has five columns: Need, Feasibility, Effectiveness, Cost, and Comparison to Alternatives. Each column contains a set of questions to be answered for each proposal.

Need	Feasibility	Effectiveness	Cost	Comparison to Alternatives
Is there a stated need for a novel approach and/or additional resources?	Is there demonstrated feasibility of implementing the proposal in identified setting or timeframe, including how it aligns with target VA vision/strategy?	Is there proof of how effective the proposed policy or program will be and how success will be measured?	Is there a breakdown of internal and/or external budget cost impacts?	Have alternative policies or programs been considered and dismissed?

https://www.peprec.research.va.gov/PEPRECRESEARCH/docs/Policy_Brief_12_EBP_Checklist.pdf

