



## **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

### **Joint Brain, Behavioral, and Mental Health and Medical Health**

#### **Scientific Merit Review Board**

**AGENCY:** Department of Veterans Affairs.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to file.

**SUMMARY:** We are giving notice that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs intends to renew the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Joint Brain, Behavioral, and Mental Health and Medical Health Scientific Merit Review Board (formerly Joint Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Clinical Science Research and Development Services Scientific Merit Review Board) for a 2-year period. The Secretary has determined that the Committee is necessary and in the public interest.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jeffrey Moragne, Committee Management Office, Department of Veterans Affairs, Advisory Committee Management Office (00AC), 811 Vermont Avenue, 4th floor, NW, Washington, DC 20420; telephone (202) 714-1578; or email at [Jeffrey.Moragne@va.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.Moragne@va.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee ACT, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs intends to renew the Health Systems Research Scientific Merit Review Board (Joint Brain Behavioral or Board) for two (2) years from the filing date of the charter's renewal. The Board is to provide for the fair and equitable selection of the most meritorious research projects for support by VA research funds and to offer advice for research program officials on program priorities and policies. The Board ultimate objective is to provide expert review of the scientific quality, budget, safety, and mission-relevance of investigator-initiated research applications submitted for VA merit review consideration and to offer advice for research program officials on program priorities and policies.

Also in pursuant to 41 C.F.R § 102-3.65, the Department of Veterans Affairs provides this written notice determination stating that the Board is in the public interest and found to be in accordance with the Federal Advisory Community Act (FACA), the FACA 2025 Final Rule, and current to the U.S. General Services Administration, Committee Management Secretariat guidance. The following factors below provide an overview of the Committee's operations and public interest intent.

Annual Budget – The overall operating costs for Joint Brain Behavioral is \$1,600,000. All members receive travel expenses and a per diem allowance in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulation for any travel made in connection with their duties as members of the Board. The expected costs are broken into:

- (i) Federal personnel (based on full-time equivalent (FTE) usage basis) is 4.9 with other Federal internal costs being \$1,060,000.
- (ii) Proposed payments to Non-Federal Members are \$540,000. There are 32 members on the Parent Committee and 32 Subcommittees with more than 1,000 consultant members who do not serve on the Parent Committee. Subcommittee members are recruited based on the number and the research focus of the applications received. Non-Federal members receive up to \$300/day of service.
- (iii) Reimbursable costs are \$0.00 non-applicable for the Board.

This Committee does not have any dollar value of grants expected for the fiscal year.

Membership Selection – The Board members are selected based on professional achievement and expertise in the research subject areas needed. Board membership shall represent, to the extent possible, diverse geographical backgrounds, Veterans of diverse eras, and branches of service.

Existing Federal Advisory Committees - The following list of 27 VA advisory committees includes 18 that are statute (with an asterisk \*) and 9 non-statutory committees.

- 1) VA National Academic Affiliations Council

- \*2) Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials
- 3) Cooperative Studies Scientific Evaluation Committee
- \*4) Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation
- \*5) Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education
- \*6) Veterans' Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards (Administratively Inactive)
- \*7) Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War
- \*8) Geriatrics and Gerontology Advisory Committee
- \*9) Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
- 10) Health Systems Research Service Merit Review Board
- \*11) Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
- 12) Joint Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Clinical Science Research and Development Services Scientific Merit Review Board
- \*13) Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
- 14) National Research Advisory Council
- \*15) Advisory Committee on U.S. Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States
- \*16) Advisory Committee on Prosthetics and Special Disabilities Programs
- \*17) Advisory Committee on the Readjustment of Veterans
- \*18) Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation
- 19) Rehabilitation Research and Development Service Scientific Merit Review Board
- 20) Veterans' Rural Health Advisory Committee
- \*21) Special Medical Advisory Group
- \*22) Advisory Committee on Structural Safety of Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities
- \*23) Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs
- 24) Veterans' Family, Caregiver, and Survivor Advisory Committee

\*25) Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board

26) Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee

\*27) Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

Justification - The review of biomedical research proposals requires highly specialized expertise. The Broad and appropriate expertise can only be obtained by recruiting experts both from within and outside of the Federal Government.

Summary of Previous Committee Accomplishments - This FACA Scientific Merit Review Board (SMRB) reviews and evaluates approximately 1,000 biomedical research proposals per year through its subcommittees. These evaluations have assisted VA Office of Research Development (ORD) in selecting the research projects most likely to lead to improvements in Veteran health and healthcare. VA ORD funds approximately 20% of the proposals it receives. This SMRB needs to continue its activities so VA ORD can continue to benefit from expert evaluations when making funding decisions.

Why Committee is Essential – The Joint Brain, Behavioral, and Mental Health and Medical Health Scientific Merit Review Board provides expert review of the scientific quality, budget, safety, and mission-relevance of investigator-initiated research applications that are submitted for VA merit review consideration and to offers advice for research program officials on program priorities and policies. The applications the Board reviews address research questions within the general area of biomedical and behavioral research or clinical science research. VA research is a statutory mandate under 38 U.S. Code § 7303, Public Law No. 117-328. VA Research priorities are further mandated by the Hannon Act (traumatic brain injury), the PACT Act (military toxic exposures and Gulf War Illness), the CARA act (Pain and opioid treatment), the Cleland Dole Act (Precision Oncology), and the MISSION and Elizabeth Dole Acts (community care). There is no other mechanism for VA to get this expert advice.

In conclusion, this Notice of Intent states that this renewing Board is in the public interest, essential to the conduct of agency business and that the information provided is not available through any other advisory committee or source within the Federal Government.

Dated: March 16, 2026.

**LaTonya L. Small,**

*Federal Advisory Committee Management Officer.*

[FR Doc. 2026-05362 Filed: 3/18/2026 8:45 am; Publication Date: 3/19/2026]