

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 5224

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a scholarship program to increase the availability of physicians who provide primary health care services at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 28, 2014

Mr. McDERMOTT introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a scholarship program to increase the availability of physicians who provide primary health care services at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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 “Restoring the Doctors
5 of Our Country through Scholarships Veterans Affairs Act
6 of 2014” or the “RDOCS–VA Act of 2014”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Medical facilities of the Department of Vet-
2 erans Affairs are in dire need of more physicians,
3 with a particular need for doctors trained in primary
4 care specialties.

5 (2) The Health Professionals Educational As-
6 sistance Program established by chapter 76 of title
7 38, United States Code, provides educational assist-
8 ance through scholarships and loan forgiveness for a
9 range of health professionals, however, it does not
10 specifically encourage a commitment to primary care
11 by physicians employed by the Department of Vet-
12 erans Affairs.

13 (3) The Reserve Officers' Training Corps
14 (ROTC) model of education and training is a re-
15 spected and effective way of meeting the need of the
16 United States for educated and trained officers in
17 the Armed Forces, and it can be applied to train
18 and educate physicians to provide primary care serv-
19 ices.

20 (4) Congress can build off of the Health Profes-
21 sionals Educational Assistance Program and the
22 ROTC model to solve the primary care shortage by
23 providing full-tuition scholarships to students com-
24 mitted to serving the United States as primary care
25 doctors at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

1 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF RESTORING THE DOCTORS OF**
2 **OUR COUNTRY THROUGH SCHOLARSHIPS—**
3 **VETERANS AFFAIRS PROGRAM.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 76 of title 38, United
5 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
6 lowing new subchapter:

7 “SUBCHAPTER VIII—RESTORING THE DOCTORS
8 OF OUR COUNTRY THROUGH SCHOLAR-
9 SHIPS—VETERANS AFFAIRS

10 **“§ 7691. Authority for program**

11 “As part of the Educational Assistance Program, the
12 Secretary shall carry out a scholarship program under this
13 subchapter in order to provide for the increased avail-
14 ability of physicians who provide primary health care serv-
15 ices at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans
16 Affairs. The program shall be known as the Restoring the
17 Doctors of Our Country through Scholarships–Veterans
18 Affairs program (in this subchapter referred to as the
19 ‘RDOCS–VA program’).

20 **“§ 7692. Scholarship program**

21 “(a) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the RDOCS–VA
22 program, the Secretary shall award not less than 400
23 RDOCS–VA scholarships to individuals who are selected
24 by the Secretary and enter into an agreement under sub-
25 section (b). Under such scholarships, the Secretary shall
26 pay—

1 “(1) to the participating undergraduate medical
2 program all tuition and costs for the undergraduate
3 medical education of an RDOCS–VA scholar for a
4 period of study not exceeding 48 consecutive
5 months; and

6 “(2) to the RDOCS–VA scholar a cost-of-living
7 stipend, in an amount determined by the Secretary.

8 “(b) AGREEMENT.—To participate in the RDOCS–
9 VA program, an RDOCS–VA scholar shall agree to—

10 “(1) be admitted into and maintain enrollment
11 in a participating undergraduate medical program in
12 the State of residence of the scholar (or if such
13 State of residence operates no such program, in a
14 participating undergraduate medical program in a
15 State within an associated region);

16 “(2) when enrolled in such program, maintain
17 a minimum level of academic standing (to be deter-
18 mined by the Secretary);

19 “(3) complete an accredited residency training
20 program in a primary care specialty;

21 “(4) become licensed to practice medicine in the
22 State of residence of the scholar;

23 “(5) receive and maintain board certification in
24 a primary care specialty; and

1 “(6) complete a five-year post-graduate period
2 of employment by the Department of Veterans Af-
3 fairs performing primary care services.

4 “(c) PRIORITY IN AWARDING SCHOLARSHIPS.—In se-
5 lecting RDOCS–VA scholars and awarding scholarships
6 under subsection (a), the Secretary shall give preference
7 to applicants who—

8 “(1) are enrolled in an accelerated track family-
9 medicine program; or

10 “(2) elect to complete the period of employment
11 described in subsection (b)(6) at a facility of the De-
12 partment that the Secretary designates as having an
13 urgent need for primary care physicians.

14 “(d) INELIGIBILITY FOR OTHER EDUCATIONAL AS-
15 SISTANCE.—An RDOCS–VA scholar shall not be eligible
16 for other assistance under this chapter in connection with
17 the education received under the RDOCS–VA program.

18 **“§ 7693. Breach of agreement: liability**

19 “(a) IN GENERAL.—An RDOCS–VA scholar (other
20 than a scholar described in subsection (b)) who fails to
21 accept payment, or instructs the participating under-
22 graduate medical program in which the scholar is enrolled
23 not to accept payment, in whole or in part, of a scholarship
24 under the agreement entered into under section 7692(b)
25 of this title shall be liable to the United States for liq-

1 undated damages in the amount of \$1,500. Such liability
2 is in addition to any period of obligated service or other
3 obligation or liability under the agreement.

4 “(b) LIABILITY.—(1) An RDOCS–VA scholar shall
5 be liable to the United States for the amount which has
6 been paid to or on behalf of the scholar under the agree-
7 ment entered into under section 7692(b) of this title if
8 any of the following occurs:

9 “(A) The scholar fails to maintain an accept-
10 able level of academic standing described in para-
11 graph (2) of such section 7692(b).

12 “(B) The scholar is dismissed from the partici-
13 pating undergraduate medical program for discipli-
14 nary reasons.

15 “(C) The scholar voluntarily terminates the
16 course of training in such program before the com-
17 pletion of such program.

18 “(D) The scholar fails to become licensed to
19 practice medicine in the State of residence of the
20 scholar during a period of time determined under
21 regulations prescribed by the Secretary.

22 “(2) Liability under this subsection is in lieu of any
23 service obligation arising under the agreement of the
24 RDOCS–VA scholar.

1 “(c) RECOVERY.—(1) If an RDOCS–VA officer
2 breaches the agreement by failing (for any reason) to com-
3 plete the period of obligated service of the officer, the
4 United States shall be entitled to recover from the officer
5 an amount determined in accordance with the formula de-
6 scribed in section 7617(c)(1) of this title.

7 “(2) Any amount of damages which the United
8 States is entitled to recover under this section shall be
9 paid to the United States within the one-year period be-
10 ginning on the date of the breach of the agreement.

11 **“§ 7694. Reports**

12 “The Secretary shall annually submit to the Commit-
13 tees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives
14 and the Senate a report on the physician workforce of the
15 Department. Such report shall include—

16 “(1) the number of scholarships awarded under
17 this subchapter during the year covered by the re-
18 port;

19 “(2) data on the physician shortage of the De-
20 partment, if any, disaggregated by the medical facil-
21 ity of the Department; and

22 “(3) a gap analysis of the primary care practi-
23 tioners needed in each medical facility of the De-
24 partment, and a five- and ten-year estimates of the

1 funding needed to close the gap through the
2 RDOCS–VA program.

3 **“§ 7695. Definitions**

4 “In this subchapter:

5 “(1) The term ‘accelerated track family-medi-
6 cine program’ means an appropriately accredited, in-
7 tegrated course of study in which a candidate can
8 complete undergraduate medical education and grad-
9 uate medical education in six years.

10 “(2) The term ‘associated region’ means—

11 “(A) the area encompassing the boundaries
12 of Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana,
13 and Idaho;

14 “(B) the area encompassing the bound-
15 aries of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts,
16 Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Vermont;

17 “(C) the area encompassing the boundaries
18 of Delaware and Pennsylvania; or

19 “(D) the area encompassing the bound-
20 aries of Maryland, the District of Columbia,
21 and Virginia.

22 “(3) The term ‘board certification’ means a cer-
23 tification to practice medicine in a specialty, by an
24 appropriate medical specialty board.

1 “(4) The term ‘participating undergraduate
2 medical program’ means an allopathic or osteopathic
3 undergraduate medical program operated by a State.

4 “(5) The term ‘primary care specialty’ means
5 geriatrics, gerontology, family medicine, or general
6 internal medicine.

7 “(6) The term ‘RDOCS–VA officer’ means an
8 RDOCS–VA program participant who has completed
9 undergraduate medical training, but has not yet ful-
10 filled the remaining requirements of the scholarship
11 agreement entered into under section 7692(b) of this
12 title.

13 “(7) The term ‘RDOCS–VA scholar’ means an
14 individual participating in an RDOCS–VA program
15 pursuant to a scholarship agreement entered into
16 under section 7692(b) of this title, but has not yet
17 completed undergraduate medical education.

18 “(8) STATE.—The term ‘State’ means each of
19 the several States and the District of Columbia.”.

20 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
21 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding
22 after the item relating to section 7684 the following new
23 items:

“SUBCHAPTER VIII—RESTORING THE DOCTORS OF OUR COUNTRY THROUGH
SCHOLARSHIPS—VETERANS AFFAIRS

“7691. Authority for program.

“7692. Scholarship program.

“7693. Breach of agreement: liability.
“7694. Reports.
“7695. Definitions.”.

