

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2257

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 5, 2009

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department 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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Outreach Im-
5 provement Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF OUTREACH.**

7 Section 101 of title 38, United States Code, is
8 amended by adding at the end the following new para-
9 graph:

1 “(34) The term ‘outreach’ means the act or
2 process of reaching out in a systematic manner to
3 proactively provide information, services, and bene-
4 fits counseling to veterans, and to the spouses, chil-
5 dren, and parents of veterans who may be eligible to
6 receive benefits under the laws administered by the
7 Secretary, to ensure that such individuals are fully
8 informed about, and assisted in applying for, any
9 benefits and programs under such laws.”.

10 **SEC. 3. AUTHORITIES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ENHANCE-**
11 **MENT OF OUTREACH OF ACTIVITIES DEPART-**
12 **MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

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

16 “SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH
17 **“§ 561. Outreach activities: Funding**

18 “(a) SEPARATE ACCOUNT FOR OUTREACH ACTIVI-
19 TIES.—The Secretary shall establish a separate account
20 for the funding of the outreach activities of the Depart-
21 ment, and shall establish within such account a separate
22 subaccount for the funding of the outreach activities of
23 each element of the Department specified in subsection
24 (c).

1 “(b) SEPARATE STATEMENT OF AMOUNT FOR OUT-
2 REACH ACTIVITIES.—In the budget justification materials
3 submitted to Congress in support of the Department
4 budget for any fiscal year (as submitted with the budget
5 of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31), the
6 Secretary shall include a separate statement of the
7 amount requested for such fiscal year for activities as fol-
8 lows:

9 “(1) For outreach activities of the Department
10 in aggregate.

11 “(2) For outreach activities of each element of
12 the Department specified in subsection (c).

13 “(c) ELEMENTS SPECIFIED.—The elements of the
14 Department specified in this subsection are as follows:

15 “(1) The Veterans Health Administration.

16 “(2) The Veterans Benefits Administration.

17 “(3) The National Cemetery Administration.

18 **“§ 562. Outreach activities: Coordination of activities**
19 **within Department**

20 “(a) COORDINATION.—The Secretary shall establish
21 and maintain procedures for ensuring the effective coordi-
22 nation of the outreach activities of the Department be-
23 tween and among the following:

24 “(1) The Office of the Secretary.

25 “(2) The Office of Public Affairs.

1 “(3) The Veterans Health Administration.

2 “(4) The Veterans Benefits Administration.

3 “(5) The National Cemetery Administration.

4 “(b) REVIEW AND MODIFICATION OF PROCE-
5 DURES.—The Secretary shall—

6 “(1) periodically review the procedures main-
7 tained under subsection (a) for the purpose of ensur-
8 ing that such procedures meet the requirement in
9 that subsection; and

10 “(2) make such modifications to such proce-
11 dures as the Secretary considers appropriate in light
12 of such review in order to better achieve that pur-
13 pose.

14 **“§ 563. Outreach activities: Cooperative activities**
15 **with States; grants to States for improve-**
16 **ment of outreach**

17 “(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to
18 assist States in carrying out programs that offer a high
19 probability of improving outreach and assistance to vet-
20 erans, and to the spouses, children, and parents of vet-
21 erans who may be eligible to receive veterans’ or veterans-
22 related benefits, to ensure that such individuals are fully
23 informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans
24 and veterans-related benefits and programs (including
25 under State veterans programs).

1 “(b) PROXIMITY TO VETERAN POPULATIONS.—The
2 Secretary shall ensure that outreach and assistance is pro-
3 vided under programs referred to in subsection (a) in loca-
4 tions proximate to populations of veterans and other indi-
5 viduals referred to in that subsection, as determined uti-
6 lizing criteria for determining the proximity of such popu-
7 lations to veterans health care services.

8 “(c) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AND ARRANGE-
9 MENTS.—The Secretary may enter into cooperative agree-
10 ments and arrangements with veterans agencies of the
11 States in order to carry out, coordinate, improve, or other-
12 wise enhance outreach by the Department and the States
13 (including outreach with respect to State veterans’ pro-
14 grams).

15 “(d) GRANTS TO STATE AGENCIES.—(1) The Sec-
16 retary may award grants to veterans agencies of States
17 in order to achieve purposes as follows:

18 “(A) To carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
19 erwise enhance outreach, including activities pursu-
20 ant to cooperative agreements and arrangements
21 under subsection (c).

22 “(B) To carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
23 erwise enhance activities to assist in the development
24 and submittal of claims for veterans’ and veterans-
25 related benefits, including activities pursuant to co-

1 operative agreements and arrangements under sub-
2 section (c).

3 “(2) A veterans agency of a State receiving a grant
4 under this subsection may use the grant amount for pur-
5 poses described in paragraph (1) or award all or any por-
6 tion of such grant amount to local governments in such
7 State, other public entities in such State, or private non-
8 profit organizations in such State for such purposes.

9 “(e) AVAILABILITY OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Amounts
10 available for the Department for outreach in the account
11 under section 561 of this title shall be available for activi-
12 ties under this section, including grants under subsection
13 (d).”.

14 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
15 at the beginning of chapter 5 of such title is amended by
16 adding at the end the following new items:

“SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH

“561. Outreach activities: Funding.

“562. Outreach activities: Coordination of activities within Department.

“563. Outreach activities: Cooperative activities with States; grants to States for
improvement of outreach.”.

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