

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4363

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a veterans conservation corps, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 9, 2017

Mr. POLIS (for himself, Mr. RUIZ, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. NOLAN, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. POCAN, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. KIHUEN, and Ms. SHEA-PORTER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, the Judiciary, and Science, Space, and Technology, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a veterans conservation corps, 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 Conservation  
5 Corps Act of 2017”.

6 **SEC. 2. VETERANS CONSERVATION CORPS.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans  
2       Affairs shall, in cooperation with the Attorney Gen-  
3       eral, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of  
4       Commerce, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the  
5       Secretary of the Interior, the Chief Executive Officer  
6       of the Corporation for National and Community  
7       Service, and the Chief of Engineers, establish a vet-  
8       erans conservation corps to assist veterans in the  
9       transition from service in the Armed Forces to civil-  
10      ian life and to employ veterans—

11                   (A) in conservation, resource management,  
12                    firefighting, law enforcement, and historic pres-  
13                    ervation projects on public lands and mainte-  
14                    nance and improvement projects for cemeteries  
15                    under the jurisdiction of the National Cemetery  
16                    Administration; and

17                    (B) as firefighters, law enforcement offi-  
18                    cers, and disaster relief personnel.

19           (2) VETERAN ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to  
20      participate in the veterans conservation corps, a vet-  
21      eran shall be unemployed.

22           (b) CONSERVATION, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, HIS-  
23      TORIC PRESERVATION, AND CEMETERY MAINTENANCE  
24      AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—As part of the veterans con-  
2           servation corps, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs,  
3           the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Com-  
4           merce, the Secretary of the Interior, the Chief Exec-  
5           utive Officer of the Corporation for National and  
6           Community Service, and the Chief of Engineers  
7           shall—

8                   (A) employ veterans to carry out projects  
9                   described in subsection (a)(1); and

10                   (B) award grants to, or enter into con-  
11                   tracts with, State governments, local govern-  
12                   ments, or nongovernmental entities to employ  
13                   veterans to carry out projects described in sub-  
14                   section (a)(1).

15           (2) PRIORITY.—In employing or awarding  
16           grants or contracts to employ veterans under this  
17           subsection, the Secretaries referred to in paragraph  
18           (1) and the Chief of Engineers shall give priority to-  
19           wards the employment of veterans who served on ac-  
20           tive duty in the Armed Forces on or after September  
21           11, 2001.

22           (3) COORDINATION.—The Secretary of Vet-  
23           erans Affairs shall coordinate the activities of the  
24           Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Com-  
25           merce, the Secretary of the Interior, the Chief Exec-

1       utive Officer of the Corporation for National and  
2       Community Service, and the Chief of Engineers to  
3       employ veterans as part of the veterans conservation  
4       corps.

5           (4) OVERSIGHT OF PROJECTS.—The Secretaries  
6       referred to in paragraph (1) and the Chief of Engi-  
7       neers shall each provide oversight of the projects for  
8       which they employ veterans under subparagraph (A)  
9       of such paragraph or award grants or enter into  
10      contracts under subparagraph (B) of such para-  
11      graph.

12      (c) FIRST RESPONDERS.—

13           (1) FIREFIGHTERS.—As part of the veterans  
14      conservation corps, the Secretary of Homeland Secu-  
15      rity shall award grants under section 34 of the Fed-  
16      eral Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15  
17      U.S.C. 2229a) to hire veterans as firefighters.

18           (2) LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.—As part of  
19      the veterans conservation corps, the Attorney Gen-  
20      eral shall award grants under part Q of title I of the  
21      Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of  
22      1968 (42 U.S.C. 3796dd et seq.) to hire veterans as  
23      law enforcement officers.

24           (3) DISASTER RELIEF PERSONNEL.—As part of  
25      the veterans conservation corps, the Secretary of

1 Homeland Security shall provide funds to increase  
2 participation by veterans in the FEMA Corps pro-  
3 gram, which is a partnership between the Corpora-  
4 tion for National and Community Service and the  
5 Federal Emergency Management Agency.

6 (4) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants or pro-  
7 viding funds under this subsection to hire veterans,  
8 the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attor-  
9 ney General shall give priority to the hiring of vet-  
10 erans who served on active duty in the Armed  
11 Forces on or after September 11, 2001.

12 (d) ASSISTANCE.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans  
14 Affairs may provide assistance to the Secretaries re-  
15 ferred to in subsection (a), the Attorney General, the  
16 Chief of Engineers, and the Chief Executive Officer  
17 to carry out the veterans conservation corps. Such  
18 assistance may take the form of a transfer under  
19 paragraph (2).

20 (2) TRANSFERS.—Except as otherwise provided  
21 in this subsection, of amounts appropriated or other-  
22 wise made available to the Secretary of Veterans Af-  
23 fairs to carry out this section, the Secretary of Vet-  
24 erans Affairs may transfer such amounts as the Sec-

1       retary considers appropriate to carry out the vet-  
2       erans conservation corps to the following:

3               (A) The Attorney General.

4               (B) The Secretary of Agriculture.

5               (C) The Secretary of Commerce.

6               (D) The Secretary of Homeland Security.

7               (E) The Secretary of the Interior.

8               (F) The Corporation for National and  
9       Community Service.

10              (G) The Chief of Engineers.

11              (3) ASSISTANCE FOR CONSERVATION, RE-  
12       SOURCE MANAGEMENT, HISTORIC PRESERVATION,  
13       AND CEMETERY MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT  
14       PROJECTS.—

15              (A) APPLICATION.—If a Secretary referred  
16       to in subsection (b)(1) or the Chief of Engi-  
17       neers or the Chief Executive Officer seeks as-  
18       sistance under paragraph (1) to employ a vet-  
19       eran to carry out a project under subparagraph  
20       (A) of subsection (b)(1) or to award a grant or  
21       contract to carry out a project under subpara-  
22       graph (B) of such subsection, such Secretary or  
23       the Chief of Engineers shall submit to the Sec-  
24       retary of Veterans Affairs an application there-  
25       for at such time, in such manner, and con-

1           taining such information as the Secretary of  
2           Veterans Affairs may require.

3           (B) SELECTION.—The Secretary of Vet-  
4           erans Affairs shall, in consultation with the  
5           steering committee established under subpara-  
6           graph (C), award assistance under this para-  
7           graph in accordance with such criteria as the  
8           steering committee establishes.

9           (C) STEERING COMMITTEE.—

10           (i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of  
11           Veterans Affairs shall establish a steering  
12           committee—

13                   (I) to establish selection criteria  
14                   for the awarding of assistance under  
15                   paragraph (1) to employ a veteran to  
16                   carry out a project under subpara-  
17                   graph (A) of subsection (b)(1) or to  
18                   award a grant or contract to carry out  
19                   a project under subparagraph (B) of  
20                   such subsection; and

21                   (II) to provide the Secretary of  
22                   Veterans Affairs with advice on  
23                   awarding assistance under this sub-  
24                   section with respect to projects de-  
25                   scribed in subsection (a)(1) and car-

1                   rying out the requirements of the vet-  
2                   erans conservation corps under sub-  
3                   section (b).

4                   (ii) COMPOSITION.—The steering com-  
5                   mittee shall be composed of the following:

6                               (I) The Secretary of Veterans Af-  
7                               fairs.

8                               (II) The Secretary of Agri-  
9                               culture.

10                              (III) The Secretary of Com-  
11                              merce.

12                              (IV) The Secretary of the Inte-  
13                              rior.

14                              (V) The Corporation for National  
15                              and Community Service.

16                              (VI) The Chief of Engineers.

17                   (iii) CHAIRPERSON.—The chairperson  
18                   of the steering committee shall be the Sec-  
19                   retary of Veterans Affairs.

20                              (iv) ADVISORY INPUT.—The Secretary  
21                              of Defense, the Secretary of Labor, and  
22                              the Chief Executive Officer of the Corpora-  
23                              tion for National and Community Service  
24                              may provide advice to the steering com-  
25                              mittee.



1           (4) ASSISTANCE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS.—Not  
2           more than 10 percent of amounts appropriated or  
3           otherwise made available to the Secretary of Vet-  
4           erans Affairs to carry out this section may be trans-  
5           ferred to the Attorney General and the Secretary of  
6           Homeland Security to employ veterans under sub-  
7           section (c).

8           (e) REPORTING FRAMEWORK.—The Secretary of Vet-  
9           erans Affairs shall establish a reporting framework to reg-  
10          ularly monitor and evaluate the veterans conservation  
11          corps to ensure proper oversight and accountability of the  
12          veterans conservation corps.

13          (f) OUTREACH.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
14          shall ensure that veterans employed under the veterans  
15          conservation corps are aware of benefits and assistance  
16          available to them under laws administered by the Sec-  
17          retary of Veterans Affairs.

18          (g) DONATIONS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
19          may solicit, accept, hold, administer, use, and dispose of,  
20          in furtherance of the purpose of this Act, donations of any  
21          money or property, real, personal, or mixed, tangible or  
22          intangible, received by gift, devise, bequest, or otherwise.  
23          Donations accepted under this subparagraph shall be used  
24          as nearly as possible in accordance with the terms, if any,  
25          of such donation.

1 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is available without  
3 further appropriation to the Secretary of Veterans  
4 Affairs to carry out this section, \$600,000,000 for  
5 the period of fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

6 (2) LIMITATION.—Of amounts appropriated or  
7 otherwise made available to carry out this section,  
8 not more than five percent may be spent to admin-  
9 ister the veterans conservation corps.

10 (i) DEFINITION OF VETERAN.—In this section, the  
11 term “veteran” has the meaning given the term in section  
12 101 of title 38, United States Code.

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