

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 6260

To direct the Secretary of Defense to establish a working group for the reform of the casualty assistance officer program, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 14, 2021

Mr. BACON introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Defense to establish a working group for the reform of the casualty assistance officer program, 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 “Casualty Assistance
5 Reform Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. CASUALTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: REFORM; ES-**
7 **TABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP.**

8 (a) CASUALTY ASSISTANCE REFORM WORKING
9 GROUP.—

1 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
3 retary of Defense shall establish a working group to
4 be known as the “Casualty Assistance Reform
5 Working Group” (in this section referred to as the
6 “Working Group”).

7 (2) DUTIES.—The Working Group shall per-
8 form the following duties:

9 (A) Create standards and training for
10 CAOs across the military departments.

11 (B) Explore the possibility of establishing
12 a unique badge designation for—

13 (i) CAOs who have performed CAO
14 duty more than five times; or

15 (ii) professional CAOs.

16 (C) Examine the current workflow of cas-
17 ualty affairs support across the military depart-
18 ments, including administrative processes and
19 survivor engagements.

20 (D) Perform a gap analysis and solution
21 document that clearly identifies and prioritizes
22 critical changes to modernize and profes-
23 sionalize the casualty experience for survivors.

24 (E) Review the organization of the Office
25 of Casualty, Mortuary Affairs and Military Fu-

1 neral Honors to ensure it is positioned to co-
2 ordinate policy and assist in all matters under
3 its jurisdiction, across the Armed Forces, in-
4 cluding any potential intersections with the De-
5 fense Prisoner of War and Missing in Action
6 Accounting Agency.

7 (F) Explore the establishment of—

8 (i) an annual meeting, led by the Sec-
9 retary of Defense, with gold star families;
10 and

11 (ii) a surviving and gold star family
12 leadership council.

13 (G) Recommend improvements to the fam-
14 ily notification process of Arlington National
15 Cemetery.

16 (H) Explore the redesign of the Days
17 Ahead Binder, including creating an electronic
18 version.

19 (I) Consider the expansion of the DD
20 Form 93 to include more details regarding the
21 last wishes of the deceased member.

22 (J) Assess coordination between the De-
23 partment of Defense and the Office of Sur-
24 vivors Assistance of the Department of Vet-
25 erans Affairs.

1 (3) MEMBERSHIP.—The membership of the
2 Working Group shall be composed of the following:

3 (A) The Under Secretary of Defense for
4 Personnel and Readiness, who shall serve as
5 Chair of the Working Group.

6 (B) At least one person furnished with a
7 gold star lapel button under section 1126 of
8 title 10, United States Code, by each Secretary
9 of a military department.

10 (C) Other members of the Armed Forces
11 or civilian employees of the Department of De-
12 fense, appointed by the Secretary of Defense,
13 based on knowledge of, and experience with,
14 matters described in paragraph (2).

15 (4) REPORT.—Not later than September 30,
16 2022, the Working Group shall submit to the Sec-
17 retary of Defense a report containing the determina-
18 tions and recommendations of the Working Group.

19 (5) TERMINATION.—The Working Group shall
20 terminate upon submission of the report under para-
21 graph (4).

22 (b) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than November
23 1, 2022, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the
24 Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the
25 House of Representatives a report setting forth the results

1 of a review and assessment of the casualty assistance offi-
2 cer program, including the report of the Working Group.

3 (c) ESTABLISHMENT OF CERTAIN DEFINITIONS.—

4 Not later than one year after the date of the enactment
5 of this Act, the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with
6 the Secretaries of the military departments, shall publish
7 an interim rule that establishes standard definitions, for
8 use across the military departments, of the terms “gold
9 star family” and “gold star survivor”.

10 (d) CAO DEFINED.—In this section, the term
11 “CAO” means a casualty assistance officer of the Armed
12 Forces.

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