

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1277

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a high technology education pilot program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 25, 2017

Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself, Mr. HELLER, Mrs. CAPITO, and Mr. RISCH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a high technology education pilot 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 “Veteran Employment
5 Through Technology Education Courses Act of 2017” or
6 the “VET TEC Act of 2017”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HIGH TECH-**
2 **NOLOGY PILOT PROGRAM.**

3 (a) PILOT PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
4 fairs shall carry out a pilot program under which the Sec-
5 retary shall provide eligible veterans with the opportunity
6 to enroll in high technology programs of education.

7 (b) ELIGIBILITY.—For purposes of the pilot program
8 under this section, an eligible veteran is a veteran who
9 is entitled to educational assistance under the laws admin-
10 istered by the Secretary.

11 (c) CONTRACTS.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of carrying out
13 subsection (a), by not later than 180 days after the
14 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
15 shall, in consultation with the State approving agen-
16 cies and as the Secretary considers applicable, seek
17 to enter into contracts with multiple qualified pro-
18 viders of high technology programs of education for
19 the provision of such programs to eligible veterans
20 under the pilot program.

21 (2) PAYMENT OF CONTRACTORS.—A contract
22 under this subsection shall provide that the Sec-
23 retary shall pay to a provider—

24 (A) 25 percent of the cost of providing the
25 program of education upon the enrollment of an
26 eligible veteran in the program;

1 (B) 25 percent of such cost upon the com-
2 pletion of the program by the veteran; and

3 (C) 50 percent of such cost upon the em-
4 ployment of the veteran in a field related to the
5 course of study, following completion of the pro-
6 gram.

7 (3) QUALIFIED PROVIDERS.—For purposes of
8 the pilot program, a provider of a high technology
9 program of education is qualified if the provider—

10 (A) has been operational for at least two
11 years and has offered, for at least two years,
12 the credential it plans to offer under the pilot
13 program;

14 (B) verifies, to the satisfaction of the Sec-
15 retary, that each credential it plans to offer
16 through the pilot program has demonstrated
17 market value based on the employment and
18 earnings of its participants in that program
19 during the most recent two-year period; and

20 (C) has the ability to evaluate job place-
21 ment rates and earnings through means other
22 than survey data or self-reported data, such as
23 through agreements with State or Federal
24 agencies.

1 (4) TUITION REIMBURSEMENT.—In entering
2 into contracts to carry out the pilot program, the
3 Secretary shall give preference to a qualified pro-
4 vider that offers tuition reimbursement for any stu-
5 dent who—

6 (A) completes a program of education of-
7 fered by the provider; and

8 (B) does not find full-time meaningful em-
9 ployment within the 180-day period beginning
10 on the date the student completes the program.

11 (5) LIMITATION ON TUITION.—In the case of a
12 qualified provider that is a for-profit organization,
13 the tuition charged for a high technology program of
14 education under a contract under this subsection
15 may not exceed 125 percent of the average tuition
16 charged by nonprofit organizations for similar pro-
17 grams, as determined by the Secretary.

18 (6) REMOVAL OF CONTRACTORS.—The Sec-
19 retary shall remove from participation in the pilot
20 program any qualified provider that increases the
21 tuition for a high technology program of education
22 under a contract under this subsection by more than
23 10 percent in any year as compared to the previous
24 year.

1 (d) HOUSING STIPEND.—The Secretary shall pay to
2 each eligible veteran who is enrolled in a high technology
3 program of education under the pilot program on a full-
4 time basis a monthly housing stipend equal to the prod-
5 uct—

6 (1) of—

7 (A) in the case of a veteran pursuing resi-
8 dent training, the monthly amount of the basic
9 allowance for housing payable under section
10 403 of title 37, United States Code, for a mem-
11 ber with dependents in pay grade E-5 residing
12 in the military housing area that encompasses
13 all or the majority portion of the ZIP code area
14 in which is located the institution at which the
15 individual is enrolled; or

16 (B) in the case of a veteran pursuing a
17 program of education through distance learn-
18 ing, a monthly amount equal to 50 percent of
19 the amount payable under subparagraph (A),
20 multiplied by

21 (2) the lesser of—

22 (A) 1.0; or

23 (B) the number of course hours borne by
24 the individual in pursuit of the program of edu-
25 cation involved, divided by the minimum num-

1 ber of course hours required for full-time pur-
2 suit of such program of education, rounded to
3 the nearest multiple of 10.

4 (e) REPORTS.—

5 (1) SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Not
6 later than one year after the date of the enactment
7 of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary
8 shall submit to Congress a report on the pilot pro-
9 gram under this section.

10 (2) COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—

11 (A) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than
12 three years after the date on which the Sec-
13 retary first enters into a contract under this
14 section, the Comptroller General of the United
15 States shall submit to Congress a report con-
16 taining the results of the interim assessment of
17 the Comptroller General. Such report shall in-
18 clude the following:

19 (i) The recommendations of the
20 Comptroller General for improving the
21 pilot program.

22 (ii) An assessment of each of the fol-
23 lowing:

24 (I) The technology experience of
25 the directors and instructors of the

1 providers of high technology programs
2 of education under the pilot program.

3 (II) Whether the providers co-
4 operated with the technology industry
5 to create the curriculum for the pro-
6 gram of education.

7 (III) Whether the providers use
8 an open source curriculum for the
9 program of education.

10 (IV) The admittance rate into
11 the pilot program.

12 (V) The completion rate for vet-
13 erans who participate in the pilot pro-
14 gram.

15 (VI) The average age of veterans
16 who participate in the pilot program.

17 (VII) The job placement rate for
18 veterans who completed a program of
19 education under the pilot program.

20 (VIII) Whether the employment
21 of veterans who completed a program
22 of education under the pilot program
23 was part or full time.

24 (IX) Whether a veteran who
25 found employment after completing a

1 program of education under the pilot
2 program was employed in a field re-
3 lated to the course of study under the
4 program of education.

5 (B) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than five
6 years after the date on which the Secretary first
7 enters into a contract under this section, the
8 Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a
9 final report on the pilot program. Such report
10 shall include the recommendation of the Comp-
11 troller General with respect to whether the pro-
12 gram should be extended and an assessment of
13 each of the following:

14 (i) Each item described in subclauses
15 (I) through (IX) of subparagraph (A)(ii).

16 (ii) The percentage of veterans who
17 completed a program of education under
18 the pilot program who were subsequently
19 employed for a period of six months or
20 longer.

21 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

22 (1) HIGH TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM OF EDU-
23 CATION.—The term “high technology program of
24 education” means a program of education that—

1 (A) is offered by an entity other than an
2 institution of higher learning;

3 (B) does not lead to a degree; and

4 (C) provides instruction in computer pro-
5 gramming, computer software, media applica-
6 tion, data processing, or information sciences.

7 (2) STATE APPROVING AGENCY.—The term
8 “State approving agency” means a department or
9 agency of a State designated under section 3671 of
10 title 38, United States Code.

11 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
12 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans
13 Affairs \$15,000,000 for each fiscal year during which the
14 Secretary carries out a pilot program under this section.

15 (h) TERMINATION.—The authority to carry out a
16 pilot program under this section shall terminate on the
17 date that is five years after the date on which the Sec-
18 retary first enters into a contract under this section.

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