

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1918

To require the Secretary of Commerce to establish a grant program to facilitate the training and employment of veterans for certain conservation activities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 8, 2023

Ms. MURKOWSKI (for herself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. SULLIVAN, and Ms. BALDWIN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Commerce to establish a grant program to facilitate the training and employment of veterans for certain conservation activities, 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 “Don Young Veterans
5 Advancing Conservation Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) Veterans are among the greatest assets of
2 the United States.

3 (2) Veterans are highly skilled and trained indi-
4 viduals whose mission is to protect their commu-
5 nities.

6 (3) Studies show that community-focused
7 growth and engagement assists veterans with mental
8 health and combat-related trauma.

9 (4) Scuba diving has been found to help im-
10 prove mental, physical, and emotional health and
11 has been specifically linked to improvement in the
12 symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

13 **SEC. 3. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE VETERANS ADVANC-**
14 **ING CONSERVATION GRANT PROGRAM.**

15 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 120 days after
16 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall
17 establish a program, to be known as the “Veterans Ad-
18 vancing Conservation Grant Program”, under which the
19 Secretary may award grants, on a competitive basis, to
20 nonprofit organizations that train or employ veterans to
21 conduct underwater marine and coastal conservation ac-
22 tivities.

23 (b) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to receive a grant
24 under this section, an organization shall submit to the
25 Secretary an application in such form, at such time, and

1 containing such information as the Secretary determines
2 appropriate.

3 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—An organization awarded a
4 grant under this section may use grant funds to train or
5 employ veterans to conduct activities described in sub-
6 section (a), which may include—

- 7 (1) response to coral disease;
- 8 (2) restoration and rehabilitation of coral;
- 9 (3) eradication of invasive species;
- 10 (4) removal of marine debris;
- 11 (5) rescue of marine mammals and reptiles;
- 12 (6) scientific research and development;
- 13 (7) tagging of sharks and other marine animals;
- 14 (8) mapping of shipwrecks;
- 15 (9) underwater survey work;
- 16 (10) hurricane recovery; and
- 17 (11) coastal restoration and resilience activities.

18 (d) COORDINATION.—In carrying out this section, the
19 Secretary shall coordinate with the Secretary of the Inte-
20 rior.

21 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
22 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section—

- 23 (1) \$1,000,000 for fiscal year 2024;
- 24 (2) \$1,200,000 for fiscal year 2025;
- 25 (3) \$1,400,000 for fiscal year 2026;

1 (4) \$1,600,000 for fiscal year 2027; and

2 (5) \$1,800,000 for fiscal year 2028.

3 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4 (1) NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.—The term
5 “nonprofit organization” means an organization de-
6 scribed in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue
7 Code of 1986 and exempt from taxation under
8 501(a) of that Code.

9 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
10 the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Ad-
11 ministrator of the National Oceanic and Atmos-
12 pheric Administration.

13 (3) VETERAN.—The term “veteran” has the
14 meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38,
15 United States Code.

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