

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2207

To allow qualified volunteer first responders to qualify for public service loan forgiveness.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 7, 2017

Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mrs. MCCASKILL, and Ms. HEITKAMP) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To allow qualified volunteer first responders to qualify for public service loan forgiveness.

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 “Volunteer First Re-  
5 sponder Loan Forgiveness Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. LOAN FORGIVENESS FOR VOLUNTEER FIRST RE-**  
7 **SPONDERS.**

8 Section 455(m)(3) of the Higher Education Act of  
9 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)(3)) is amended—

10 (1) in subparagraph (B)—

1 (A) in clause (i), by striking “or” after the  
2 semicolon;

3 (B) in clause (ii), by striking the period at  
4 the end and inserting “; or”; and

5 (C) by adding at the end the following:

6 “(iii) volunteer work as a qualified  
7 volunteer first responder in accordance  
8 with subparagraph (C).”; and

9 (2) by adding at the end the following:

10 “(C) QUALIFIED VOLUNTEER FIRST RE-  
11 SPONDER.—

12 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘quali-  
13 fied volunteer first responder’ means an in-  
14 dividual who—

15 “(I) does volunteer work for a  
16 public safety organization (which may  
17 include firefighters, law enforcement  
18 officers, emergency medical personnel,  
19 or other first responders to emer-  
20 gencies); and

21 “(II) is certified as a firefighter,  
22 law enforcement officer, emergency  
23 medical services provider, or other re-  
24 sponder in the State, unit of general  
25 local government, or Indian tribe in

1                   which the individual serves as a volun-  
2                   teer.

3                   “(ii) PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZA-  
4                   TION.—The term ‘public safety organiza-  
5                   tion’ means any State, local, or tribal gov-  
6                   ernmental agency or nonprofit organization  
7                   that has the principal purpose of pro-  
8                   tecting the safety of life, health, or prop-  
9                   erty.

10                  “(iii) FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT.—The  
11                  Secretary shall—

12                               “(I) determine the minimum vol-  
13                               unteer time required for a qualified  
14                               volunteer first responder to be treated  
15                               as an individual employed in a full-  
16                               time job for purposes of this sub-  
17                               section; and

18                               “(II) ensure that such minimum  
19                               volunteer time—

20                                       “(aa) is not less than the  
21                                       amount of volunteer time that is  
22                                       required for the qualified volun-  
23                                       teer first responder to be consid-  
24                                       ered an active member of the rel-

1 evant public safety organization;  
2 and

3 “(bb) does not exceed the  
4 equivalent of 200 hours per  
5 year.”.

6 **SEC. 3. REGULATIONS.**

7 The Secretary of Education shall promulgate, after  
8 consultation with public safety organizations (which shall  
9 include firefighter, law enforcement officer, and emergency  
10 responder organizations), regulations to carry out the  
11 amendments made by section 2, including regulations re-  
12 lating to—

13 (1) the minimum volunteer time required for a  
14 qualified volunteer first responder to be treated as  
15 an individual employed in a full-time job for pur-  
16 poses of section 455(m) of the Higher Education  
17 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)); and

18 (2) the process of tracking and verifying that  
19 volunteer time.

20 **SEC. 4. ENGAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS.**

21 The Secretary of Education shall develop a plan re-  
22 garding how the Department of Education will—

23 (1) disseminate information and raise aware-  
24 ness about eligibility for qualified volunteer first re-  
25 sponders for public service loan forgiveness under

1 section 455(m) of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
2 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)) (as amended by this Act); and

3 (2) engage qualified volunteer first responders  
4 and public safety organizations in the process of  
5 tracking and verifying volunteer hours for purposes  
6 of public service loan forgiveness under such section.

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