

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1990

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 10, 2005

Mr. BURR introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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 Outreach Im-
5 provement Act of 2005”.

6 **SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENT OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES WITHIN**
7 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 5 of title 38, United
9 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
10 lowing new subchapter:

1 “SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

2 **“§ 561. Purpose**

3 “It is the purpose of this subchapter to provide as-
4 sistance to States for carrying out programs that—

5 “(1) improve outreach and assistance to vet-
6 erans and the spouses, children, and parents of vet-
7 erans; and

8 “(2) ensure that the individuals described in
9 paragraph (1) are fully informed about, and assisted
10 in applying for, any veterans and veterans-related
11 benefits and programs (including State veterans pro-
12 grams) for which such individuals may be eligible.

13 **“§ 562. Coordination within Department**

14 “(a) The Secretary shall establish procedures to en-
15 sure the effective coordination of the outreach activities
16 of the Department among—

17 “(1) the Office of the Secretary;

18 “(2) the Office of Public Affairs;

19 “(3) the Veterans Health Administration;

20 “(4) the Veterans Benefits Administration; and

21 “(5) the National Cemetery Administration.

22 “(b) The Secretary shall—

23 “(1) annually review the procedures established
24 under subsection (a) to ensure that such procedures

1 accomplish the objective described in subsection (a);
2 and

3 “(2) modify those procedures, as the Secretary
4 considers appropriate, based upon the review under
5 paragraph (1), to improve the attainment of the ob-
6 jective described in subsection (a).

7 **“§ 563. Cooperative agreements with States**

8 “(a) The Secretary shall ensure that assistance is
9 provided by the Secretary for outreach and assistance
10 under State and county veteran service programs referred
11 to in section 561 of this title in locations—

12 “(1) that have relatively large concentrations of
13 populations of veterans and other individuals re-
14 ferred to in section 561 of this title; or

15 “(2) that are experiencing growth in the popu-
16 lation of veterans and other individuals referred to
17 in section 561 of this title.

18 “(b) The Secretary may enter into cooperative agree-
19 ments with State veterans agencies to carry out, coordi-
20 nate, improve, or otherwise enhance outreach by the De-
21 partment and the States, including outreach with respect
22 to State veterans programs.

1 **“§ 564. Grants to States for outreach improvement**

2 “(a) The Secretary may award grants to State vet-
3 erans agencies, which grants may be used to carry out,
4 coordinate, improve, or otherwise enhance—

5 “(1) outreach, including activities under a coop-
6 erative agreement described in section 563(b) of this
7 title; and

8 “(2) activities to assist in the development and
9 submittal of claims for veterans and veterans-related
10 benefits, including activities under a cooperative
11 agreement described in section 563(b) of this title.

12 “(b) The Secretary shall allocate grant funds to
13 States under this section based on the percentage of the
14 veteran population residing in the respective States.

15 “(c) A State veterans agency receiving grant funds
16 under this section shall allocate—

17 “(1) a portion of such grant funds to local gov-
18 ernments of that State that are providing veterans
19 outreach services, based on the number of veterans
20 residing within the jurisdiction of each such local
21 government;

22 “(2) a portion of such grant funds to local gov-
23 ernments of that State that are seeking to establish
24 a program of veterans outreach services; and

25 “(3) the remaining grant funds for outreach ac-
26 tivities by that State veterans agency.

1 “(d) Grant funds awarded to a State under this sec-
2 tion—

3 “(1) may not be used by the State for adminis-
4 trative costs;

5 “(2) may not be used to provide more than 50
6 percent of the total cost of the activities described
7 in subsection (a); and

8 “(3) shall be used to expand existing outreach
9 programs and services and not to supplant existing
10 State and local funding for such programs and serv-
11 ices.

12 “(e) Grant funds awarded under this section may be
13 used to provide State and local government employees
14 with—

15 “(1) sufficient training regarding veterans out-
16 reach services to allow such employees to obtain ac-
17 creditation, in accordance with procedures approved
18 by the Secretary; and

19 “(2) continuing education regarding veterans
20 outreach services, if such employees have been ac-
21 credited, as described in paragraph (1).

22 “(f)(1) If a unit of local government does not have
23 a veteran services program, grant funds under this sub-
24 section may be used to establish such a program.

1 “(2) If a unit of local government does not have a
2 veteran services program and does not seek to use grant
3 funds under this section to establish such a program, the
4 State veterans agency may use grant funds under this sub-
5 section to provide outreach services for veterans residing
6 within the jurisdiction of such local government.

7 “(3) If State and local government veteran service
8 programs in a State do not seek to receive a grant amount
9 under this section, the allocation calculated for that State
10 under subsection (b) shall be reallocated to those States
11 with local government veteran service programs that are
12 seeking grant funds under this section.

13 **“§ 565. Funding**

14 “(a) Amounts for outreach activities of the Depart-
15 ment under this subchapter shall be budgeted and appro-
16 priated through a separate appropriation account.

17 “(b) The Secretary shall include, in the budget jus-
18 tification materials submitted to Congress in support of
19 the Department budget for each fiscal year, a separate
20 statement describing the amount requested to be appro-
21 priated for that fiscal year for the account specified in
22 subsection (a).

23 **“§ 566. Definitions**

24 “In this subchapter:

1 “(1) The term ‘outreach’ means the act or
 2 process of taking steps in a systematic manner to
 3 provide information, services, and benefits coun-
 4 seling to veterans, and the survivors of veterans, who
 5 may be eligible to receive benefits under the laws ad-
 6 ministered by the Secretary to ensure that those in-
 7 dividuals are fully informed about, and assisted in
 8 applying for, any benefits and programs under such
 9 laws for which they may be eligible.

10 “(2) The term ‘state veterans agency’ means
 11 the department or agency of the government of a
 12 State that is responsible for programs and activities
 13 of that State government relating to veterans bene-
 14 fits.”.

15 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
 16 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding
 17 at the end the following:

“SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- “561. Purpose.
- “562. Coordination within Department.
- “563. Cooperative agreements with States.
- “564. Grants to States for outreach improvement.
- “565. Funding.
- “566. Definitions.”.

18 (c) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
 19 are authorized to be appropriated \$25,000,000 for each
 20 of the fiscal years 2006, 2007, and 2008 to carry out the

- 1 provisions of subchapter IV of chapter 5 of title 38, United
- 2 States Code, as added by subsection (a).

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