

110TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2689

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program for the provision of readjustment and mental health services to veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 12, 2007

Mr. RODRIGUEZ (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SIRES, and Mr. PEARCE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program for the provision of readjustment and mental health services to veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. PROGRAM ON PROVISION OF READJUSTMENT**  
2 **AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES TO**  
3 **VETERANS WHO SERVED IN OPERATION**  
4 **IRAQI FREEDOM AND OPERATION ENDURING**  
5 **FREEDOM.**

6 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days  
7 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary  
8 of Veterans Affairs shall establish a program to provide—

9 (1) to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and  
10 Operation Enduring Freedom, particularly veterans  
11 who served in such operations while in the National  
12 Guard and the Reserves—

13 (A) peer outreach services;

14 (B) peer support services;

15 (C) readjustment counseling and services  
16 described in section 1712A of title 38, United  
17 States Code; and

18 (D) mental health services; and

19 (2) to members of the immediate family of such  
20 a veteran, during the three-year period beginning on  
21 the date of the return of such veteran from deploy-  
22 ment in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation  
23 Enduring Freedom, education, support, counseling,  
24 and mental health services to assist in—

25 (A) the readjustment of such veteran to ci-  
26 vilian life;

1 (B) in the case such veteran has an injury  
2 or illness incurred during such deployment, the  
3 recovery of such veteran; and

4 (C) the readjustment of the family fol-  
5 lowing the return of such veteran.

6 (b) CONTRACTS WITH COMMUNITY MENTAL  
7 HEALTH CENTERS AND QUALIFIED ENTITIES FOR PRO-  
8 VISION OF SERVICES.—In carrying out the program re-  
9 quired by subsection (a), the Secretary shall contract with  
10 community mental health centers and other qualified enti-  
11 ties to provide the services required by such subsection  
12 in areas the Secretary determines are not adequately  
13 served by other health care facilities of the Department  
14 of Veterans Affairs. Such contracts shall require each con-  
15 tracting community health center or entity—

16 (1) to the extent practicable, to employ veterans  
17 trained under subsection (c);

18 (2) to the extent practicable, to use telehealth  
19 services for the delivery of services required by sub-  
20 section (a);

21 (3) to participate in the training program con-  
22 ducted in accordance with subsection (d);

23 (4) to comply with applicable protocols of the  
24 Department of Veterans Affairs before incurring any

1 liability on behalf of the Department for the provi-  
2 sion of the services required by subsection (a);

3 (5) to submit annual reports to the Secretary  
4 containing, with respect to the program required by  
5 subsection (a) and for the last full calendar year  
6 ending before the submission of such report—

7 (A) the number of the veterans served, vet-  
8 erans diagnosed, and courses of treatment pro-  
9 vided to veterans as part of the program re-  
10 quired by subsection (a); and

11 (B) demographic information for such  
12 services, diagnoses, and courses of treatment;

13 (6) for each veteran for whom a community  
14 mental health center or other qualified entity pro-  
15 vides mental health services under such contract, to  
16 provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with  
17 such clinical summary information as the Secretary  
18 shall require; and

19 (7) to meet such other requirements as the Sec-  
20 retary shall require.

21 (c) TRAINING OF VETERANS FOR THE PROVISION OF  
22 PEER-OUTREACH AND PEER-SUPPORT SERVICES.—In  
23 carrying out the program required by subsection (a), the  
24 Secretary shall contract with a national not-for-profit  
25 mental health organization to carry out a national pro-

1 gram of training for veterans described in subsection (a)  
2 to provide the services described in subparagraphs (A) and  
3 (B) of paragraph (1) of such subsection.

4 (d) TRAINING OF CLINICIANS FOR PROVISION OF  
5 SERVICES.—The Secretary shall conduct a training pro-  
6 gram for clinicians of community mental health centers  
7 or entities that have contracts with the Secretary under  
8 subsection (b) to ensure that such clinicians can provide  
9 the services required by subsection (a) in a manner that—

10 (1) recognizes factors that are unique to the ex-  
11 perience of veterans who served on active duty in  
12 Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring  
13 Freedom (including their combat and military train-  
14 ing experiences); and

15 (2) utilizes best practices and technologies.

16 (e) REPORTS REQUIRED.—

17 (1) INITIAL REPORT ON PLAN FOR IMPLEMEN-  
18 TATION.—Not later than 45 days after the date of  
19 the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit  
20 to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate  
21 and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the  
22 House of Representatives a report containing the  
23 plans of the Secretary to implement the program re-  
24 quired by subsection (a).

1           (2) STATUS REPORT.—Not later than one year  
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
3 retary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans'  
4 Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Vet-  
5 erans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a re-  
6 port on the implementation of the program. Such re-  
7 port shall include the following:

8           (A) Information on the number of veterans  
9 who received services as part of the program  
10 and the type of services received during the last  
11 full calendar year completed before the submis-  
12 sion of such report.

13           (B) An evaluation of the provision of serv-  
14 ices under paragraph (2) of subsection (a) and  
15 a recommendation as to whether the period de-  
16 scribed in such paragraph should be extended  
17 to a five-year period.

18           (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
19 are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Vet-  
20 erans Affairs such sums as may be necessary to carry out  
21 this section.

1 **SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR HEALTH CARE**  
2 **SERVICES FROM DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS**  
3 **AFFAIRS FOR VETERANS OF SERVICE IN**  
4 **COMBAT THEATER.**

5 Section 1710(e)(3)(C) of title 38, United States  
6 Code, is amended by striking “2 years” and inserting “5  
7 years”.

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