

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3620

To provide for a comprehensive national research effort on the physical and mental health and other readjustment needs of the members of the Armed Forces and veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and their families.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

Ms. KILPATRICK introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To provide for a comprehensive national research effort on the physical and mental health and other readjustment needs of the members of the Armed Forces and veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and their families.

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 “Homecoming Enhance-
5 ment Research and Oversight Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. STUDY ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND**
2 **OTHER READJUSTMENT NEEDS OF MEMBERS**
3 **AND FORMER MEMBERS OF THE ARMED**
4 **FORCES WHO DEPLOYED IN OPERATION**
5 **IRAQI FREEDOM AND OPERATION ENDURING**
6 **FREEDOM AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
8 ings:

9 (1) The order on April 11, 2007 to extend the
10 tour of duty for members of the Army on active duty
11 in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring
12 Freedom to 15 months is placing additional strains
13 on the wellness of members of the Armed Forces
14 and their families back home.

15 (2) 20,000 United States troops have been de-
16 ployed at least 5 times since the war effort began.
17 70,000 have been deployed at least 3 times.

18 (3) Sixty percent of deployed members of the
19 Armed Forces have family responsibilities.

20 (4) More than 500,000 children have one or
21 more parents deployed in support of the Global War
22 on Terror at any given time.

23 (5) It is estimated that more than 2,700 chil-
24 dren in the United States have lost a parent in Op-
25 eration Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Free-
26 dom.

1 (6) Women now comprise 16 percent of the all
2 voluntary military force, yet there is a lack of re-
3 search on the psychological needs and readjustment
4 concerns of female military personnel.

5 (7) Members of the Armed Forces who have
6 screened positive for a mental health disorder were
7 twice as likely as members who have screened nega-
8 tive for a mental health disorder to report concern
9 about possible stigmatization and other barriers to
10 accessing care. Among members of the Armed
11 Forces who screened positive for a mental health
12 disorder, only between 23 percent and 40 percent
13 have sought care.

14 (8) As many as one quarter of all members of
15 the Armed Forces returning from a combat zone
16 have less visible psychological injuries.

17 (9) On average, more than 20 percent of
18 wounded members of the Armed Forces have a trau-
19 matic brain injury.

20 (10) More than a decade passed between the
21 end of the conflict in Vietnam and the publication by
22 the Federal Government of its landmark study on
23 the readjustment needs of veterans of that conflict.
24 The impacts of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on
25 members of the Armed Forces, former members of

1 the Armed Forces, and their families must be rigor-
2 ously researched and addressed without a wait of 10
3 years.

4 (b) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Defense
5 shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Af-
6 fairs, enter into an agreement with the National Academy
7 of Sciences for a study on the physical and mental health
8 and other readjustment needs of members and former
9 members of the Armed Forces who deployed in Operation
10 Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom and their
11 families as a result of such deployment.

12 (c) PHASES.—The study required under subsection
13 (b) shall consist of two phases:

14 (1) A preliminary phase, to be completed not
15 later than 180 days after the date of the enactment
16 of this Act—

17 (A) to identify preliminary findings on the
18 physical and mental health and other readjust-
19 ment needs described in subsection (b) and on
20 gaps in care for the members, former members,
21 and families described in that subsection; and

22 (B) to determine the parameters of the
23 second phase of the study under paragraph (2).

24 (2) A second phase, to be completed not later
25 than three years after the date of enactment of this

1 Act, to carry out a comprehensive assessment, in ac-
2 cordance with the parameters identified under the
3 preliminary report required by paragraph (1), of the
4 physical and mental health and other readjustment
5 needs of members and former members of the
6 Armed Forces who deployed in Operation Iraqi
7 Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom and their
8 families as a result of such deployment, including, at
9 a minimum—

10 (A) an assessment of the psychological, so-
11 cial, and economic impacts of such deployment
12 on such members and former members and
13 their families;

14 (B) an assessment of the particular im-
15 pacts of multiple deployments in Operation
16 Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom
17 on such members and former members and
18 their families;

19 (C) an assessment of the scope of the neu-
20 rological, psychiatric, and psychological effects
21 of traumatic brain injury on members and
22 former members of the Armed Forces, including
23 the effects of such effects on the family mem-
24 bers of such members and former members, and
25 an assessment of the efficacy of current treat-

1 ment approaches for traumatic brain injury in
2 the United States and the efficacy of screenings
3 and treatment approaches for traumatic brain
4 injury within the Department of Defense and
5 the Department of Veterans Affairs;

6 (D) an assessment of the effects of
7 undiagnosed injuries such as post-traumatic
8 stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, and
9 an estimate of the long-term costs associated
10 with such injuries;

11 (E) an assessment of the particular needs
12 and concerns of female members of the Armed
13 Forces and female veterans;

14 (F) an assessment of the particular needs
15 and concerns of minority members of the
16 Armed Forces and minority veterans;

17 (G) an assessment of the particular edu-
18 cational and vocational needs of such members
19 and former members and their families;

20 (H) the development, based on such as-
21 sessments, of recommendations for programs,
22 treatments, or policy remedies targeted at pre-
23 venting, minimizing or addressing the impacts,
24 gaps and needs identified; and

1 (I) the development, based on such assess-
2 ments, of recommendations for additional re-
3 search on such needs.

4 (d) POPULATIONS TO BE STUDIED.—The study re-
5 quired under subsection (b) shall consider the readjust-
6 ment needs of each population of individuals as follows:

7 (1) Members of the regular components of the
8 Armed Forces who are returning, or have returned,
9 to the United States from deployment in Operation
10 Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom.

11 (2) Members of the National Guard and Re-
12 serve who are returning, or have returned, to the
13 United States from deployment in Operation Iraqi
14 Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom.

15 (3) Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom or
16 Operation Enduring Freedom.

17 (4) Family members of the members and vet-
18 erans described in paragraphs (1) through (3).

19 (e) ACCESS TO INFORMATION.—The National Acad-
20 emy of Sciences shall have access to such personnel, infor-
21 mation, records, and systems of the Department of De-
22 fense and the Department of Veterans Affairs as the Na-
23 tional Academy of Sciences requires in order to carry out
24 the study required under subsection (b).

1 (f) PRIVACY OF INFORMATION.—The National Acad-
2 emy of Sciences shall maintain any personally identifiable
3 information accessed by the Academy in carrying out the
4 study required under subsection (b) in accordance with all
5 applicable laws, protections, and best practices regarding
6 the privacy of such information, and may not permit ac-
7 cess to such information by any persons or entities not
8 engaged in work under the study.

9 (g) REPORTS.—

10 (1) REPORTS BY NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
11 SCIENCES.—Upon the completion of each phase of
12 the study required under subsection (b), the Na-
13 tional Academy of Sciences shall submit to the Sec-
14 retary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Af-
15 fairs a report on such phase of the study.

16 (2) REPORTS BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.—
17 The Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress
18 a comprehensive report on each phase of the study
19 required under subsection (b) not later than 30 days
20 after the date of the completion of such phase of the
21 study. Each report shall set forth the report of the
22 National Academy of Sciences on the phase of the
23 study concerned under paragraph (1) and include
24 such other information as the Secretary considers
25 appropriate.

1 (3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF REPORTS.—The
2 Secretary of Defense shall make available to the
3 public each report submitted to Congress under
4 paragraph (2), including by posting an electronic
5 copy of such report on the Internet website of the
6 Department of Defense that is available to the pub-
7 lic.

8 (h) DOD AND VA RESPONSE TO NAS REPORTS.—

9 (1) PRELIMINARY RESPONSE.—Not later than
10 45 days after the receipt of a report under sub-
11 section (g)(1) on each phase of the study required
12 under subsection (b), the Secretary of Defense and
13 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly de-
14 velop a preliminary joint Department of Defense-De-
15 partment of Veterans Affairs plan to address the
16 findings and recommendations of the National Acad-
17 emy of Sciences contained in such report. The pre-
18 liminary plan shall provide preliminary proposals on
19 the matters set forth in paragraph (3).

20 (2) FINAL RESPONSE.—Not later than 90 days
21 after the receipt of a report under subsection (g)(1)
22 on each phase of the study required under sub-
23 section (b), the Secretary of Defense and the Sec-
24 retary of Veterans Affairs shall jointly develop a
25 final joint Department of Defense-Department of

1 Veterans Affairs plan to address the findings and
2 recommendations of the National Academy of
3 Sciences contained in such report. The final plan
4 shall provide final proposals on the matters set forth
5 in paragraph (3).

6 (3) COVERED MATTERS.—The matters set forth
7 in this paragraph with respect to a phase of the
8 study required under subsection (b) are as follows:

9 (A) Modifications of policy or practice
10 within the Department of Defense and the De-
11 partment of Veterans Affairs that are necessary
12 to address gaps in care or services as identified
13 by the National Academy of Sciences under
14 such phase of the study.

15 (B) Modifications of policy or practice
16 within the Department of Defense and the De-
17 partment of Veterans Affairs that are necessary
18 to address recommendations made by the Na-
19 tional Academy of Sciences under such phase of
20 the study.

21 (C) An estimate of the costs of imple-
22 menting the modifications set forth under sub-
23 paragraphs (A) and (B), set forth by fiscal year
24 for at least the first five fiscal years beginning
25 after the date of the plan concerned.

1 (4) REPORTS ON RESPONSES.—The Secretary
2 of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
3 shall jointly submit to Congress a report setting
4 forth each joint plan developed under paragraphs (1)
5 and (2).

6 (5) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF RESPONSES.—
7 The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Vet-
8 erans Affairs shall each make available to the public
9 each report submitted to Congress under paragraph
10 (4), including by posting an electronic copy of such
11 report on the Internet website of the Department of
12 Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs, as
13 applicable, that is available to the public.

14 (6) GAO AUDIT.—Not later than 45 days after
15 the submittal to Congress of the report under para-
16 graph (4) on the final joint Department of Defense-
17 Department of Veterans Affairs plan under para-
18 graph (2), the Comptroller General of the United
19 States shall submit to Congress a report assessing
20 the contents of such report under paragraph (4).
21 The report of the Comptroller General under this
22 paragraph shall include—

23 (A) an assessment of the adequacy and
24 sufficiency of the final joint Department of De-
25 fense-Department of Veterans Affairs plan in

1 addressing the findings and recommendations
2 of the National Academy of Sciences as a result
3 of the study required under subsection (b);

4 (B) an assessment of the feasibility and
5 advisability of the modifications of policy and
6 practice proposed in the final joint Department
7 of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs
8 plan;

9 (C) an assessment of the sufficiency and
10 accuracy of the cost estimates in the final joint
11 Department of Defense-Department of Veterans
12 Affairs plan; and

13 (D) the comments, if any, of the National
14 Academy of Sciences on the final joint Depart-
15 ment of Defense-Department of Veterans Af-
16 fairs plan.

17 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
18 authorized to be appropriated to the Department of De-
19 fense such sums as may be necessary to carry out this
20 section.

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