

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2898

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide support services for family caregivers of disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 16, 2009

Mrs. HALVORSON introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide support services for family caregivers of disabled veterans, 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 “Wounded Warrior
5 Caregiver Assistance Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SUPPORT SERVICES FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 17 of title 38, United
8 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
9 lowing new section:

1 **“§ 1786. Support services for family caregivers**

2 “(a) TRAINING.—The Secretary shall make available
3 interactive training sessions for family caregivers and indi-
4 viduals who provide such caregivers support under this
5 chapter or through the aging network (including respite
6 care providers, nursing care providers, and counselors).

7 Such training shall—

8 “(1) be made available both in person and on
9 an Internet website;

10 “(2) incorporate telehealth technologies to the
11 extent practicable; and

12 “(3) teach techniques, strategies, and skills for
13 caring for a disabled veteran, including, at a min-
14 imum, effective methods of—

15 “(A) caring for a veteran—

16 “(i) with post-traumatic stress dis-
17 order or a traumatic brain injury; and

18 “(ii) who was deployed in support of
19 Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation
20 Iraqi Freedom; and

21 “(B) recording details regarding the health
22 of the veteran.

23 “(b) ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES.—The Secretary
24 shall provide family caregivers with information con-
25 cerning public, private, and non-profit agencies that offer

1 support to such caregivers. In providing such information,
2 the Secretary shall—

3 “(1) collaborate with the Assistant Secretary
4 for Aging of the Department of Health and Human
5 Services in order to provide family caregivers access
6 to Aging and Disability Resource Centers under the
7 Administration on Aging of the Department of
8 Health and Human Services; and

9 “(2) contract with a private entity to provide
10 family caregivers with an Internet-based service that
11 contains—

12 “(A) a directory of services available at the
13 county level;

14 “(B) message boards and other similar
15 tools that provide family caregivers with the
16 ability to interact with each other and disabled
17 veterans for the purpose of fostering peer sup-
18 port and creating support networks; and

19 “(C) comprehensive information explaining
20 health-related topics and issues relevant to the
21 needs of disabled veterans and family care-
22 givers.

23 “(c) INFORMATION AND OUTREACH.—The Secretary
24 shall conduct outreach to inform disabled veterans and the

1 families of such veterans of the services under this section.

2 Such outreach shall include the following:

3 “(1) Public service announcements.

4 “(2) Brochures and pamphlets.

5 “(3) Full use of Internet-based outreach meth-
6 ods, including—

7 “(A) participating on social networking
8 websites;

9 “(B) methods designed specifically for
10 rural families; and

11 “(C) establishing a web page on the Inter-
12 net website of the Department that—

13 “(i) is dedicated to caregiver support;
14 and

15 “(ii) contains interactive elements, in-
16 cluding providing information based on the
17 location of the person using the web page.

18 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

19 “(1) The term ‘aging network’ has the meaning
20 given that term in section 102(5) of the Older Amer-
21 icans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3002(5)).

22 “(2) The term ‘caregiver services’ means non-
23 institutional extended care (as used in section
24 1701(6) of this title), including homemaker and
25 home health aid services.

1 “(3) The term ‘family caregiver’ means an indi-
2 vidual who—

3 “(A) is a member of the family (including
4 parents, spouses, children, siblings, step-family
5 members, and extended family members) of a
6 disabled veteran;

7 “(B) provides caregiver services to such
8 veteran for such disability; and

9 “(C) may or may not reside with such vet-
10 eran.”.

11 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
12 at the beginning of chapter 17 of title 38, United States
13 Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new
14 item:

“1786. Support services for family caregivers.”.

15 **SEC. 3. COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR**
16 **FAMILY CAREGIVERS.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1782 of title 38, United
18 States Code, is amended—

19 (1) in the section heading, by striking “**IMME-**
20 **DIATE**”; and

21 (2) in subsection (c)—

22 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “; or”
23 and inserting a semicolon;

24 (B) by redesignating paragraph (2) as
25 paragraph (3); and

1 (C) by inserting after paragraph (1) the
2 following new paragraph (2):

3 “(2) a family caregiver as defined in section
4 1786 of this title; or”.

5 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
6 at the beginning of chapter 17 of title 38, United States
7 Code, is amended by striking the item relating to section
8 1782 and inserting the following new item:

“1782. Counseling, training, and mental health services for family members.”.

9 **SEC. 4. RESPITE CARE TO ASSIST FAMILY CAREGIVERS.**

10 Section 1720B of title 38, United States Code, is
11 amended—

12 (1) in subsection (a), by striking “title.” and in-
13 serting “title or who receives care from a family
14 caregiver as defined in section 1786 of this title.”;
15 and

16 (2) by adding at the end the following new sub-
17 section:

18 “(d) In furnishing respite care services under this
19 section, the Secretary shall ensure that such services—

20 “(1) fulfill the needs of the veteran receiving
21 care; and

22 “(2) are appropriate for the veteran (including
23 by taking the age of the veteran into account when

1 selecting the respite care provided to such vet-
2 eran).”.

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