

111<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION

# H. R. 3279

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs centers of excellence for rural health research, education, and clinical activities, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 21, 2009

Mr. RODRIGUEZ introduced the following bill; which was referred to the  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs centers of excellence for rural health research, education, and clinical activities, 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. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR RURAL**  
4                       **HEALTH RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND CLIN-**  
5                       **ICAL ACTIVITIES.**

6       (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 73 of  
7       title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the  
8       end the following new section:

1 **“§ 7330B. Centers of excellence for rural health re-**  
2 **search, education, and clinical activities**

3 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTERS.—The Secretary,  
4 through the Director of the Office of Rural Health, shall  
5 establish and operate not less than one and not more than  
6 five centers of excellence for rural health research, edu-  
7 cation, and clinical activities, which shall—

8 “(1) conduct research on the provision of health  
9 services in rural areas;

10 “(2) develop specific models to be used by the  
11 Department in furnishing health services to veterans  
12 in rural areas;

13 “(3) provide education and training for health  
14 care professionals of the Department on the fur-  
15 nishing of health services to veterans in rural areas;  
16 and

17 “(4) develop and implement innovative clinical  
18 activities and systems of care for the Department  
19 for the furnishing of health services to veterans in  
20 rural areas.

21 “(b) GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSION.—The Secretary shall  
22 ensure that the centers established under this section are  
23 located at health care facilities that are geographically dis-  
24 persed throughout the United States.

1       “(c) SELECTION CRITERIA.—The Secretary may not  
2 designate a health care facility as a location for a center  
3 under this section unless—

4               “(1) the peer review panel established under  
5 subsection (d) determines that the proposal sub-  
6 mitted by such facility meets the highest competitive  
7 standards of scientific and clinical merit; and

8               “(2) the Secretary determines that such facility  
9 has, or may reasonably be anticipated to develop, the  
10 following:

11                       “(A) An arrangement with an accredited  
12 medical school to provide residents with edu-  
13 cation and training in health services for vet-  
14 erans in rural areas.

15                       “(B) The ability to attract the participa-  
16 tion of scientists who are capable of ingenuity  
17 and creativity in health care research efforts.

18                       “(C) A policymaking advisory committee,  
19 composed of appropriate health care and re-  
20 search representatives of the facility and of the  
21 affiliated school or schools, to advise the direc-  
22 tors of such facility and such center on policy  
23 matters pertaining to the activities of such cen-  
24 ter during the period of the operation of such  
25 center.

1           “(D) The capability to conduct effectively  
2           evaluations of the activities of such center.

3           “(d) PANEL TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS.—(1) The  
4 Director of the Office of Rural Health shall establish a  
5 panel—

6           “(A) to evaluate the scientific and clinical  
7           merit of proposals submitted to establish cen-  
8           ters under this section; and

9           “(B) to provide advice to the Director re-  
10          garding the implementation of this section.

11          “(2) The panel shall review each proposal re-  
12          ceived from the Secretary and shall submit its views  
13          on the relative scientific and clinical merit of each  
14          such proposal to the Secretary.

15          “(3) The panel established under paragraph (1)  
16          shall be comprised of experts in the fields of public  
17          health research, education, and clinical care.

18          “(4) Members of the panel shall serve as con-  
19          sultants to the Department for a period not to ex-  
20          ceed two years.

21          “(5) The panel shall not be subject to the Fed-  
22          eral Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.).

23          “(e) REPORTS.—Not later than April 1 of each year,  
24 the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the

1 centers established under this section. Such report shall  
2 include—

3 “(1) the results of research conducted under  
4 subsection (a)(1);

5 “(2) an evaluation of models related to fur-  
6 nishing health services to veterans in rural areas de-  
7 veloped under subsection (a)(2);

8 “(3) an evaluation of the education and train-  
9 ing provided under subsection (a)(3); and

10 “(4) an evaluation of clinical activities or sys-  
11 tems of care related to furnishing health services to  
12 veterans in rural areas developed under subsection  
13 (a)(4).

14 “(f) FUNDING.—(1) There are authorized to be ap-  
15 propriated to the Medical Care Account and the Medical  
16 and Prosthetics Research Account of the Department of  
17 Veterans Affairs such sums as may be necessary for the  
18 support of the research and education activities of the cen-  
19 ters operated under this section.

20 “(2) There shall be allocated to the centers op-  
21 erated under this section, from amounts authorized  
22 to be appropriated to the Medical Care Account and  
23 the Medical and Prosthetics Research Account by  
24 paragraph (1), such amounts as the Under Sec-  
25 retary of health considers appropriate for such cen-

1       ters. Such amounts shall be allocated through the  
2       Director of the Office of Rural Health.

3           “(3) Activities of clinical and scientific inves-  
4       tigation at each center operated under this section—

5           “(A) shall be eligible to compete for the  
6       award of funding from funds appropriated for  
7       the Medical and Prosthetics Research Account;  
8       and

9           “(B) shall receive priority in the award of  
10      funding from such account to the extent that  
11      funds are awarded to projects for research in  
12      the care of rural veterans.”.

13      (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections  
14      at the beginning of chapter 73 of such title is amended  
15      by inserting after the item relating to section 7330A the  
16      following new item:

      “7330B. Centers of excellence for rural health research, education, and clinical  
          activities.”.

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