

Calendar No. 466

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION**H. R. 2147**

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 11, 2018

Received

JUNE 18, 2018

Read twice and placed on the calendar

AN ACT

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to provide treatment court services to justice-involved 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 “Veterans Treatment
5 Court Improvement Act of 2018”.

1 **SEC. 2. HIRING BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**
2 **OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUT-**
3 **REACH SPECIALISTS.**

4 (a) HIRING OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE
5 OUTREACH SPECIALISTS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after
7 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
8 of Veterans Affairs shall hire not fewer than 50 Vet-
9 erans Justice Outreach Specialists and place each
10 such Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist at an eli-
11 gible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center
12 in accordance with this section.

13 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall en-
14 sure that each Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist
15 employed under paragraph (1)—

16 (A) serves, either exclusively or in addition
17 to other duties, as part of a justice team in a
18 veterans treatment court or other veteran-fo-
19 cused court; and

20 (B) otherwise meets Department hiring
21 guidelines for Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-
22 cialists.

23 (b) ELIGIBLE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
24 MEDICAL CENTERS.—For purposes of this section, an eli-
25 gible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center is
26 any Department of Veterans Affairs medical center that—

1 (1) complies with all Department guidelines and
2 regulations for placement of a Veterans Justice Out-
3 reach Specialist;

4 (2) works within a local criminal justice system
5 with justice-involved veterans;

6 (3) maintains an affiliation with one or more
7 veterans treatment courts or other veteran-focused
8 courts; and

9 (4) either—

10 (A) routinely provides Veterans Justice
11 Outreach Specialists to serve as part of a jus-
12 tice team in a veterans treatment court or other
13 veteran-focused court; or

14 (B) establishes a plan that is approved by
15 the Secretary to provide Veterans Justice Out-
16 reach Specialists employed under subsection
17 (a)(1) to serve as part of a justice team in a
18 veterans treatment court or other veteran-fo-
19 cused court.

20 (c) PLACEMENT PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall
21 prioritize the placement of Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-
22 cialists employed under subsection (a)(1) at eligible De-
23 partment of Veterans Affairs medical centers that have
24 or intend to establish an affiliation, for the purpose of car-
25 rying out the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, with

1 a veterans treatment court, or other veteran-focused court,
2 that—

3 (1) was established on or after the date of the
4 enactment of this Act; or

5 (2)(A) was established before the date of the
6 enactment of this Act; and

7 (B) is not fully staffed with Veterans Justice
8 Outreach Specialists.

9 (d) REPORTS.—

10 (1) REPORT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AF-
11 FAIRS.—

12 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year
13 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
14 Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to
15 Congress a report on the implementation of this
16 section and its effect on the Veterans Justice
17 Outreach Program.

18 (B) CONTENTS.—The report submitted
19 under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

20 (i) The status of the efforts of the
21 Secretary to hire Veterans Justice Out-
22 reach Specialists pursuant to subsection
23 (a)(1), including the total number of Vet-
24 erans Justice Outreach Specialists hired by
25 the Secretary pursuant to such subsection

1 and the number that the Secretary expects
2 to hire pursuant to such subsection.

3 (ii) The total number of Veterans
4 Justice Outreach Specialists assigned to
5 each Department of Veterans Affairs med-
6 ical center that participates in the Vet-
7 erans Justice Outreach Program, including
8 the number of Veterans Justice Outreach
9 Specialists hired under subsection (a)(1)
10 disaggregated by Department of Veterans
11 Affairs medical center.

12 (iii) The total number of eligible De-
13 partment of Veterans Affairs medical cen-
14 ters that sought placement of a Veterans
15 Justice Outreach Specialist under sub-
16 section (a)(1), how many Veterans Justice
17 Outreach Specialists each such center
18 sought, and how many of such medical
19 centers received no placement of a Vet-
20 erans Justice Outreach Specialist under
21 subsection (a)(1).

22 (iv) For each eligible Department of
23 Veterans Affairs medical center—

24 (I) the number of justice-involved
25 veterans who were served or are ex-

pected to be served by a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist hired under subsection (a)(1); and

(II) the number of justice-involved veterans who do not have access to a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist.

(2) REPORT BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the implementation of this section and the effectiveness of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) An assessment of whether the Secretary has fulfilled the Secretary's obligations under this section.

(ii) The number of veterans who are served by Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists hired under subsection (a)(1), disaggregated by demographics (including discharge status).

1 (iii) An identification of any sub-
2 groups of veterans who underutilize serv-
3 ices provided under laws administered by
4 the Secretary, including an assessment of
5 whether these veterans have access to Vet-
6 erans Justice Outreach Specialists under
7 the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

8 (iv) Such recommendations as the
9 Comptroller General may have for the Sec-
10 retary to improve the effectiveness of the
11 Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

12 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

13 (1) JUSTICE TEAM.—The term “justice team”
14 means the group of individuals, which may include
15 a judge, court coordinator, prosecutor, public de-
16 fender, treatment provider, probation or other law
17 enforcement officer, program mentor, and Veterans
18 Justice Outreach Specialist, who assist justice-in-
19 volved veterans in a veterans treatment court or
20 other veteran-focused court.

21 (2) JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERAN.—The term
22 “justice-involved veteran” means a veteran with ac-
23 tive, ongoing, or recent contact with some compo-
24 nent of a local criminal justice system.

1 (3) LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.—The
2 term “local criminal justice system” means law en-
3 forcement, jails, prisons, and Federal, State, and
4 local courts.

5 (4) VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PRO-
6 GRAM.—The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Pro-
7 gram” means the program through which the De-
8 partment of Veterans Affairs identifies justice-in-
9 volved veterans and provides such veterans with ac-
10 cess to Department services.

11 (5) VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH SPE-
12 CIALIST.—The term “Veterans Justice Outreach
13 Specialist” means an employee of the Department of
14 Veterans Affairs who serves as a liaison between the
15 Department and the local criminal justice system on
16 behalf of a justice-involved veteran.

17 (6) VETERANS TREATMENT COURT.—The term
18 “veterans treatment court” means a State or local
19 court that is participating in the veterans treatment
20 court program (as defined in section 2991(i)(1) of

1 the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of
2 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1))).

Passed the House of Representatives June 13, 2018.

Attest: KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk.

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