

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 3251

To require the Federal Communications Commission, in coordination with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to designate a simple, easy-to-remember dialing code for veterans and other eligible individuals to use to obtain information about the benefits and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 4, 2020

Ms. ROSEN (for herself, Mrs. CAPITO, Mrs. FISCHER, and Mr. PETERS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To require the Federal Communications Commission, in coordination with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to designate a simple, easy-to-remember dialing code for veterans and other eligible individuals to use to obtain information about the benefits and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Assistance
3 Helpline Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. TELEPHONE HELPLINE FOR ASSISTANCE FOR VET-**
5 **ERANS AND OTHER ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.**

6 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

7 (1) the term “Commission” means the Federal
8 Communications Commission;

9 (2) the term “covered dialing code” means a
10 simple, easy-to-remember, 3-digit dialing code;

11 (3) the term “covered individual” means—

12 (A) a veteran;

13 (B) an individual acting on behalf of a vet-
14 eran; or

15 (C) an individual, other than a veteran,
16 who is eligible to receive a benefit or service
17 under a law administered by the Secretary;

18 (4) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary
19 of Veterans Affairs; and

20 (5) the term “veteran” has the meaning given
21 the term in section 101 of title 38, United States
22 Code.

23 (b) ESTABLISHMENT OF HELPLINE.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission, in coordi-
25 nation with the Secretary, and after conducting the
26 study required under subsection (c), shall designate

1 a covered dialing code for the purposes of a toll-free
2 telephone helpline that a covered individual may use
3 to obtain information about, or through which a cov-
4 ered individual may be directed to, any service or
5 benefit provided under a law administered by the
6 Secretary, including any service provided by the De-
7 partment of Veterans Affairs in the area in which
8 the covered individual is located.

9 (2) CONTRACT FOR DIRECTION OF CALLS.—The
10 Commission, in coordination with the Secretary, may
11 enter into a contract with an outside entity to direct
12 calls made to the telephone helpline established
13 under paragraph (1) to the appropriate person re-
14 garding a service or benefit described in that para-
15 graph.

16 (3) LIVE INDIVIDUAL.—The Commission, in co-
17 ordination with the Secretary, shall ensure that a
18 covered individual using the telephone helpline estab-
19 lished under paragraph (1) speaks with a live indi-
20 vidual rather than a recording.

21 (c) STUDY REQUIRED.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission, in coordi-
23 nation with the Secretary, shall conduct a study to
24 determine which covered dialing code is most appro-

1 appropriate for the designation required under subsection
2 (b)(1).

3 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—In conducting the study
4 required under paragraph (1), the Commission, in
5 coordination with the Secretary, shall—

6 (A) consider all covered dialing codes, in-
7 cluding the codes that are used for other pur-
8 poses;

9 (B) give preference to any code with which
10 covered individuals are likely to be familiar; and

11 (C) consult with the North American
12 Numbering Council.

13 (3) DEADLINE FOR COMPLETION.—The Com-
14 mission, in coordination with the Secretary, shall
15 complete the study required under paragraph (1) not
16 later than the date that is 180 days after the date
17 of enactment of this Act.

18 (4) NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.—No
19 additional funds are authorized to be appropriated
20 to carry out this subsection and this subsection shall
21 be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized.

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