

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2441

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 19, 2021

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

AN ACT

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expand the Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and to direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study to assess certain mental health care resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs available to veterans who live in rural areas.

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 “Sgt. Ketchum Rural
5 Veterans Mental Health Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF RURAL ACCESS NETWORK FOR**
7 **GROWTH ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM OF THE**
8 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

9 (a) **EXPANSION.**—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
10 shall establish and maintain three new centers of the
11 RANGE Program.

12 (b) **LOCATIONS.**—The centers established under sub-
13 section (a) shall be located in areas determined by the Sec-
14 retary based on—

15 (1) the need for additional mental health care
16 for rural veterans in such areas; and

17 (2) interest expressed by personnel at facilities
18 of the Department in such areas.

19 (c) **TIMELINE.**—The Secretary shall establish the
20 centers under subsection (a) during fiscal year 2022.

21 (d) **FUNDING.**—There is authorized to be appro-
22 priated \$1,200,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through
23 2024 to carry out this section.

1 **SEC. 3. GAO STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE FURNISHED**
2 **BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**
3 **TO RURAL VETERANS.**

4 (a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Comptroller General of
5 the United States shall conduct a study to assess whether
6 the Department of Veterans Affairs has sufficient re-
7 sources to serve rural veterans who need covered mental
8 health care. Such study shall include assessments of—

9 (1) whether the mental health care furnished by
10 the Secretary (through resources including the
11 RANGE Program, Enhanced RANGE Program,
12 mental health residential rehabilitation treatment
13 programs, inpatient mental health services, and
14 PRR centers) is sufficient to meet the covered men-
15 tal health care needs of rural veterans;

16 (2) how best to expand and to appropriately lo-
17 cate resources described in paragraph (1);

18 (3) whether to require the establishment of a
19 PRR center at a medical facility of the Department
20 that serves 1,000 or more veterans on the National
21 Psychosis Registry;

22 (4) the demand by rural veterans for mental
23 health resources specified in paragraph (1);

24 (5) the average wait time for a rural veteran for
25 mental health resources specified in paragraph (1);
26 and

1 (6) how many rural veterans died by suicide or
2 overdose—

3 (A) while on a wait list for mental health
4 resources specified in paragraph (1); and

5 (B) during the term of the study.

6 (b) **REPORT REQUIRED.**—Not later than 18 months
7 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Com-
8 troller General shall submit to the Committees on Vet-
9 erans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives
10 a report containing the results of the study under this sec-
11 tion.

12 **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

13 In this Act:

14 (1) The term “covered mental health care”
15 means mental health care that is more intensive
16 than traditional outpatient therapy.

17 (2) The term “PRR center” means a psycho-
18 social rehabilitation and recovery center of the De-
19 partment of Veterans Affairs.

20 (3) The term “RANGE Program” means the
21 Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement
22 Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

23 (4) The term “rural veteran” means a veteran
24 who lives in a rural or highly rural area (including
25 such an area in a Tribal or insular area), as deter-

1 mined through the use of the Rural-Urban Com-
2 muting Areas coding system of the Department of
3 Agriculture.

Passed the House of Representatives May 18, 2021.

Attest: CHERYL L. JOHNSON,
Clerk.