

GET REWARDING OUTDOOR WORK FOR OUR VETERANS ACT

OCTOBER 22, 2024.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. WESTERMAN, from the Committee on Natural Resources,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 1786]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Natural Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 1786) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the Warrior Training Advancement Course, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to administer a pilot program to employ veterans in positions that relate to conservation and resource management activities of the Department of the Interior, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATION

The purpose of H.R. 1786 is to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the Warrior Training Advancement Course, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to administer a pilot program to employ veterans in positions that relate to conservation and resource management activities of the Department of the Interior, and for other purposes.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

One of the challenges facing veterans transitioning to civilian life can be finding good jobs that match their skillsets and enable them to adequately provide for their families. Finding a job after military service impacts nearly 200,000 veterans every year, and only one in four veterans have a job lined up after leaving the Armed Forces. Finding solutions to address this problem has been a consistent priority for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The Warrior Training Advancement Course (WARTAC) is one example of a program the VA utilizes to help train future veterans for federal employment opportunities with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). WARTAC provides education and training for veterans while they are still on active duty. Due to the success of this program, the VA is now actively looking to expand its use. While there are employment opportunities at the VBA, other federal agencies could also expand their hiring of veterans, particularly the Department of the Interior (DOI). As of fiscal year 2020, only 17.4 percent of DOI employees are veterans, compared with 30.7 percent across all executive branch agencies.

H.R. 1786, the “Get Rewarding Outdoor Work for our Veterans (GROW) Act,” seeks to increase the hiring of veterans by creating a pilot program directing DOI to work with the Department of Labor (DOL) and VA to employ veterans in DOI positions related to conservation and resource management activities. This is a bipartisan bill being co-led by Congressman Rob Wittman (R-VA) that builds upon the WARTAC program to reduce unemployment amongst veterans. This legislation has the potential to provide quality employment opportunities for veterans, while also improving land management efforts and helping to address the significant maintenance backlog that continues to burden federal lands. Additionally, the GROW Act requires the VA to submit a report to Congress examining the WARTAC program and detail best practices and recommendations for federal agencies to implement these practices.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 1786 was introduced on March 24, 2023, by Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA). The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Federal Lands. The bill was also referred to the Committee on Veterans Affairs. On July 20, 2023, the Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a hearing on the bill. On September 20, 2023, the Committee on Natural Resources met to consider the bill. The Subcommittee on Federal Lands was discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1786 by unanimous consent. The bill was then ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by unanimous consent.

HEARINGS

For the purposes of clause 3(c)(6) of House rule XIII, the following hearing was used to develop or consider this measure: hearing by the Subcommittee on Federal Lands held on July 20, 2023.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Short title

This Act may be cited as the “Get Rewarding Outdoor Work for our Veterans Act” or the “GROW Act”.

Section 2. Reporting on the Warrior Training Advancement Course of the Veterans Benefit Administration

- Requires the VA to submit annual reports to Congress examining the WARTAC program that details best practices, cost saving information, and hiring results within 6 months.
- Requires the VA to share this report with the head of each federal agency.

Section 3. Pilot program to employ veterans in positions relating to conservation and resource management activities

- Requires DOL to establish guidelines containing best practices for federal departments and agencies to employ veterans transitioning from service in the Armed Forces.
- Requires DOI to establish a two-year pilot project in consultation with the DOL and VA to hire veterans in positions that relate to conservation and resource management. The agencies will provide briefings and reports on the implementation of the pilot project.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Natural Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII AND CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET ACT

1. *Cost of Legislation and the Congressional Budget Act.* With respect to the requirements of clause 3(c)(2) and (3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and sections 308(a) and 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following estimate for the bill from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office:

H.R. 1786, Get Rewarding Outdoor Work for our Veterans Act			
As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on September 20, 2023			
By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2023	2023-2028	2023-2033
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	0	*	not estimated
Increases <i>net direct spending</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2034?	No	Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	No
		Mandate Effects	
		Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
Increases <i>on-budget deficits</i> in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2034?	No	Contains private-sector mandate?	No
* = between zero and \$500,000.			

H.R. 1786 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to prepare an annual report on the Warrior Training Advance-

ment Course. That course is implemented by VA to train service members who are separating from the armed forces for positions related to veteran benefit claims at VA regional offices.

The bill also would direct the Department of Labor to use the findings of those reports to establish guidelines and best practices for federal agencies to employ separating service members. In addition, the bill would require the Department of the Interior to establish a pilot program to hire veterans for its open positions in conservation and resources management, and to report to the Congress on the results of that program. CBO expects that the program would affect which people the department hires but would not materially change how many people it employs or require additional human resources personnel to implement.

Based on the costs of similar reports and activities, CBO estimates that satisfying the requirements of H.R. 1786 would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2023–2033 period. Any spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Paul B.A. Holland (for the Department of Labor and Veterans Affairs) and Lilia Ledezma (for the Department of the Interior). The estimate was reviewed by Christina Hawley Anthony, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.

PHILLIP L. SWAGEL,
Director, Congressional Budget Office.

2. *General Performance Goals and Objectives.* As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this bill is to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the Warrior Training Advancement Course, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to administer a pilot program to employ veterans in positions that relate to conservation and resource management activities of the Department of the Interior, and for other purposes.

EARMARK STATEMENT

This bill does not contain any Congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined under clause 9(e), 9(f), and 9(g) of rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT STATEMENT

According to the Congressional Budget Office, H.R. 1786 contains no unfunded mandates as defined by the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

Directed Rule Making. This bill does not contain any directed rule makings.

Duplication of Existing Programs. This bill does not establish or reauthorize a program of the federal government known to be duplicative of another program. Such program was not included in any report from the Government Accountability Office to Congress pursuant to section 21 of Public Law 111–139 or identified in the most recent Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance published pur-

suant to the Federal Program Information Act (Public Law 95–220, as amended by Public Law 98–169) as relating to other programs.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

Any preemptive effect of this bill over state, local, or tribal law is intended to be consistent with the bill’s purposes and text and the Supremacy Clause of Article VI of the U.S. Constitution.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

As ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources, H.R. 1786 would make no changes in existing law.

