

115TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 946

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## 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Treatment  
3 Court Improvement Act of 2018”.

4 **SEC. 2. HIRING BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
5 **OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUT-**  
6 **REACH SPECIALISTS.**

7 (a) HIRING OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE  
8 OUTREACH SPECIALISTS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year  
10 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
11 retary of Veterans Affairs shall hire not fewer than  
12 50 Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists and place  
13 each such Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist at  
14 an eligible Department of Veterans Affairs medical  
15 center in accordance with this section.

16 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall en-  
17 sure that each Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist  
18 employed under paragraph (1)—

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

23 (B) otherwise meets Department hiring  
24 guidelines for Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-  
25 cialists.

1           (3) SUPPLEMENT NOT SUPPLANT.—The Sec-  
2           retary shall ensure that the total number of Vet-  
3           erans Justice Outreach Specialists employed by the  
4           Department is not less than the sum of—

5                   (A) the total number of Veterans Justice  
6           Outreach Specialists that were employed by the  
7           Department on the day before the date of the  
8           enactment of this Act; and

9                   (B) the number of Veterans Justice Out-  
10          reach Specialists set forth in paragraph (1).

11          (b) ELIGIBLE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
12          MEDICAL CENTERS.—For purposes of this section, an eli-  
13          gible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center is  
14          any Department of Veterans Affairs medical center that—

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

18                   (2) works within a local criminal justice system  
19          with justice-involved veterans;

20                   (3) maintains an affiliation with one or more  
21          veterans treatment courts or other veteran-focused  
22          courts; and

23                   (4) either—

24                           (A) routinely provides Veterans Justice  
25          Outreach Specialists to serve as part of a jus-

1           tice team in a veterans treatment court or other  
2           veteran-focused court; or

3           (B) establishes a plan that is approved by  
4           the Secretary to provide Veterans Justice Out-  
5           reach Specialists employed under subsection  
6           (a)(1) to serve as part of a justice team in a  
7           veterans treatment court or other veteran-fo-  
8           cused court.

9           (c) **PLACEMENT PRIORITY.**—The Secretary shall  
10          prioritize the placement of Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-  
11          cialists employed under subsection (a)(1) at eligible De-  
12          partment of Veterans Affairs medical centers that have  
13          or intend to establish an affiliation, for the purpose of car-  
14          rying out the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, with  
15          a veterans treatment court, or other veteran-focused court,  
16          that—

17               (1) was established on or after the date of the  
18               enactment of this Act; or

19               (2)(A) was established before the date of the  
20               enactment of this Act; and

21               (B) is not fully staffed with Veterans Justice  
22               Outreach Specialists.

23          (d) **REPORTS.**—

24               (1) **PERIODIC REPORTS BY SECRETARY OF VET-**  
25               **ERANS AFFAIRS.**—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year  
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act and  
3 not less frequently than once every year there-  
4 after, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall  
5 submit to Congress a report on the implementa-  
6 tion of this section and its effect on the Vet-  
7 erans Justice Outreach Program.

8 (B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted  
9 under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

10 (i) The status of the efforts of the  
11 Secretary to hire Veterans Justice Out-  
12 reach Specialists pursuant to subsection  
13 (a)(1), including the total number of Vet-  
14 erans Justice Outreach Specialists hired by  
15 the Secretary pursuant to such subsection  
16 and the number that the Secretary expects  
17 to hire pursuant to such subsection.

18 (ii) The total number of Veterans  
19 Justice Outreach Specialists assigned to  
20 each Department of Veterans Affairs med-  
21 ical center that participates in the Vet-  
22 erans Justice Outreach Program, including  
23 the number of Veterans Justice Outreach  
24 Specialists hired under subsection (a)(1)

1           disaggregated by Department of Veterans  
2           Affairs medical center.

3           (iii) The total number of eligible De-  
4           partment of Veterans Affairs medical cen-  
5           ters that sought placement of a Veterans  
6           Justice Outreach Specialist under sub-  
7           section (a)(1), how many Veterans Justice  
8           Outreach Specialists each such center  
9           sought, and how many of such medical  
10          centers received no placement of a Vet-  
11          erans Justice Outreach Specialist under  
12          subsection (a)(1).

13          (iv) The total number of justice-in-  
14          volved veterans who were served or are ex-  
15          pected to be served by a Veterans Justice  
16          Outreach Specialist hired under subsection  
17          (a)(1).

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

20          (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two  
21          years after the date of the enactment of this  
22          Act, the Comptroller General of the United  
23          States shall submit to Congress a report on the  
24          implementation of this section and the effective-  
25          ness of the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

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

3 (i) An assessment of whether the Sec-  
4 retary has fulfilled the Secretary's obliga-  
5 tions under this section.

6 (ii) The number of veterans who are  
7 served by Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-  
8 cialists hired under subsection (a)(1),  
9 disaggregated by demographics (including  
10 discharge status).

11 (iii) An identification of any sub-  
12 groups of veterans who underutilize serv-  
13 ices provided under laws administered by  
14 the Secretary and to which they are re-  
15 ferred by a Veterans Justice Outreach  
16 Specialist.

17 (iv) Such recommendations as the  
18 Comptroller General may have for the Sec-  
19 retary to improve the effectiveness of the  
20 Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

21 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be  
23 appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to  
24 carry out subsection (a) \$5,500,000 for each of fis-  
25 cal years 2018 through 2028.

1           (2) IDENTIFICATION OF OFFSETS.—The Sec-  
2       retary shall submit to Congress a report that identi-  
3       fies such legislative or administrative actions as the  
4       Secretary determines will result in a reduction in ex-  
5       penditures by the Department of Veterans Affairs  
6       that is equal to or greater than the amounts author-  
7       ized to be appropriated by paragraph (1).

8       (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

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

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

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

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

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

13          (6) VETERANS TREATMENT COURT.—The term  
14          “veterans treatment court” means a Federal, State,  
15          or local court that is participating in the veterans  
16          treatment court program (as defined in section  
17          2991(i)(1) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe  
18          Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1))).

Passed the Senate February 15, 2018.

Attest:

*Secretary.*

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