

Union Calendar No. 525

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 2147

[Report No. 115–682]

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.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 26, 2017

Mr. COFFMAN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

MAY 18, 2018

Additional sponsors: Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico, Ms. PINGREE, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. RUTHERFORD, Mr. PETERS, Mr. O'ROURKE, Mr. BANKS of Indiana, Mrs. COMSTOCK, Ms. KUSTER of New Hampshire, Mr. POLIQUIN, Mrs. WALORSKI, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mrs. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. TIPTON, Ms. MOORE, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. MEEHAN, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. JONES, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. TURNER, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. POCAN, Miss RICE of New York, Mr. CORREA, Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana, Mr. STIVERS, Ms. STEFANIK, Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. POLIS, Mr. JOYCE of Ohio, Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania, Mr. MACARTHUR, Mr. CRIST, Mr. NORCROSS, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. MCEACHIN, Mr. DENHAM, Mr. HIGGINS of New York, Mr. KILMER, Mr. BISHOP of Michigan, Mr. LAMB, Mr. KILDEE, and Ms. SINEMA

MAY 18, 2018

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole
House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on April 26, 2017]

A BILL

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”.*

6 **SEC. 2. HIRING BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF**
7 **ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH**
8 **SPECIALISTS.**

9 *(a) HIRING OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUT-*
10 *REACH SPECIALISTS.—*

11 *(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after*
12 *the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of*
13 *Veterans Affairs shall hire not fewer than 50 Veterans*
14 *Justice Outreach Specialists and place each such Vet-*
15 *erans Justice Outreach Specialist at an eligible De-*
16 *partment of Veterans Affairs medical center in ac-*
17 *cordance with this section.*

18 *(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall ensure*
19 *that each Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist em-*
20 *ployed under paragraph (1)—*

21 *(A) serves, either exclusively or in addition*
22 *to other duties, as part of a justice team in a*
23 *veterans treatment court or other veteran-focused*
24 *court; and*

1 (B) otherwise meets Department hiring
2 guidelines for Veterans Justice Outreach Special-
3 ists.

4 (b) *ELIGIBLE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS*
5 *MEDICAL CENTERS.*—For purposes of this section, an eligi-
6 ble Department of Veterans Affairs medical center is any
7 Department of Veterans Affairs medical center that—

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

11 (2) works within a local criminal justice system
12 with justice-involved veterans;

13 (3) maintains an affiliation with one or more
14 veterans treatment courts or other veteran-focused
15 courts; and

16 (4) either—

17 (A) routinely provides Veterans Justice
18 Outreach Specialists to serve as part of a justice
19 team in a veterans treatment court or other vet-
20 eran-focused court; or

21 (B) establishes a plan that is approved by
22 the Secretary to provide Veterans Justice Out-
23 reach Specialists employed under subsection
24 (a)(1) to serve as part of a justice team in a vet-

1 *erans treatment court or other veteran-focused*
2 *court.*

3 (c) *PLACEMENT PRIORITY.*—*The Secretary shall*
4 *prioritize the placement of Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-*
5 *cialists employed under subsection (a)(1) at eligible Depart-*
6 *ment of Veterans Affairs medical centers that have or intend*
7 *to establish an affiliation, for the purpose of carrying out*
8 *the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, with a veterans*
9 *treatment court, or other veteran-focused court, that—*

10 *(1) was established on or after the date of the en-*
11 *actment of this Act; or*

12 *(2)(A) was established before the date of the en-*
13 *actment of this Act; and*

14 *(B) is not fully staffed with Veterans Justice*
15 *Outreach Specialists.*

16 (d) *REPORTS.*—

17 (1) *REPORT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AF-*
18 *FAIRS.*—

19 (A) *IN GENERAL.*—*Not later than one year*
20 *after the date of the enactment of this Act, the*
21 *Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to*
22 *Congress a report on the implementation of this*
23 *section and its effect on the Veterans Justice*
24 *Outreach Program.*

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

3 (i) The status of the efforts of the Sec-
4 retary to hire Veterans Justice Outreach
5 Specialists pursuant to subsection (a)(1),
6 including the total number of Veterans Jus-
7 tice Outreach Specialists hired by the Sec-
8 retary pursuant to such subsection and the
9 number that the Secretary expects to hire
10 pursuant to such subsection.

11 (ii) The total number of Veterans Jus-
12 tice Outreach Specialists assigned to each
13 Department of Veterans Affairs medical
14 center that participates in the Veterans Jus-
15 tice Outreach Program, including the num-
16 ber of Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists
17 hired under subsection (a)(1) disaggregated
18 by Department of Veterans Affairs medical
19 center.

20 (iii) The total number of eligible De-
21 partment of Veterans Affairs medical cen-
22 ters that sought placement of a Veterans
23 Justice Outreach Specialist under sub-
24 section (a)(1), how many Veterans Justice
25 Outreach Specialists each such center

sought, and how many of such medical centers received no placement of a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist under subsection (a)(1).

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

(I) the number of justice-involved veterans who were served or are expected 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 three 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:

1 (i) *An assessment of whether the Sec-*
 2 *retary has fulfilled the Secretary’s obliga-*
 3 *tions under this section.*

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

9 (iii) *An identification of any sub-*
 10 *groups of veterans who underutilize services*
 11 *provided under laws administered by the*
 12 *Secretary, including an assessment of*
 13 *whether these veterans have access to Vet-*
 14 *erans Justice Outreach Specialists under*
 15 *the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.*

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

20 (e) *DEFINITIONS.—In this section:*

21 (1) *JUSTICE TEAM.—The term “justice team”*
 22 *means the group of individuals, which may include a*
 23 *judge, court coordinator, prosecutor, public defender,*
 24 *treatment provider, probation or other law enforce-*
 25 *ment officer, program mentor, and Veterans Justice*

1 *Outreach Specialist, who assist justice-involved vet-*
2 *erans in a veterans treatment court or other veteran-*
3 *focused court.*

4 (2) *JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERAN.*—*The term*
5 *“justice-involved veteran” means a veteran with ac-*
6 *tive, ongoing, or recent contact with some component*
7 *of a local criminal justice system.*

8 (3) *LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.*—*The*
9 *term “local criminal justice system” means law en-*
10 *forcement, jails, prisons, and Federal, State, and local*
11 *courts.*

12 (4) *VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROGRAM.*—
13 *The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Program”*
14 *means the program through which the Department of*
15 *Veterans Affairs identifies justice-involved veterans*
16 *and provides such veterans with access to Department*
17 *services.*

18 (5) *VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH SPE-*
19 *CIALIST.*—*The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-*
20 *cialist” means an employee of the Department of Vet-*
21 *erans Affairs who serves as a liaison between the De-*
22 *partment and the local criminal justice system on be-*
23 *half of a justice-involved veteran.*

24 (6) *VETERANS TREATMENT COURT.*—*The term*
25 *“veterans treatment court” means a State or local*

1 *court that is participating in the veterans treatment*
2 *court program (as defined in section 2991(i)(1) of the*
3 *Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968*
4 *(42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1))).*

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