

## Calendar No. 466

115TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 2147

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 11, 2018

Received

JUNE 18, 2018

Read twice and placed on the calendar

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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,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

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

1 **SEC. 2. HIRING BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
2 **OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUT-**  
3 **REACH SPECIALISTS.**

4 (a) HIRING OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE  
5 OUTREACH SPECIALISTS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after  
7 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary  
8 of Veterans Affairs shall hire not fewer than 50 Vet-  
9 erans Justice Outreach Specialists and place each  
10 such Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist at an eli-  
11 gible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center  
12 in accordance with this section.

13 (2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall en-  
14 sure that each Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist  
15 employed under paragraph (1)—

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

20 (B) otherwise meets Department hiring  
21 guidelines for Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-  
22 cialists.

23 (b) ELIGIBLE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
24 MEDICAL CENTERS.—For purposes of this section, an eli-  
25 gible Department of Veterans Affairs medical center is  
26 any Department of Veterans Affairs medical center that—

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

4           (2) works within a local criminal justice system  
5           with justice-involved veterans;

6           (3) maintains an affiliation with one or more  
7           veterans treatment courts or other veteran-focused  
8           courts; and

9           (4) either—

10           (A) routinely provides Veterans Justice  
11           Outreach Specialists to serve as part of a jus-  
12           tice team in a veterans treatment court or other  
13           veteran-focused court; or

14           (B) establishes a plan that is approved by  
15           the Secretary to provide Veterans Justice Out-  
16           reach Specialists employed under subsection  
17           (a)(1) to serve as part of a justice team in a  
18           veterans treatment court or other veteran-fo-  
19           cused court.

20       (c) PLACEMENT PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall  
21       prioritize the placement of Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-  
22       cialists employed under subsection (a)(1) at eligible De-  
23       partment of Veterans Affairs medical centers that have  
24       or intend to establish an affiliation, for the purpose of car-  
25       rying out the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, with

1 a veterans treatment court, or other veteran-focused court,  
2 that—

3 (1) was established on or after the date of the  
4 enactment of this Act; or

5 (2)(A) was established before the date of the  
6 enactment of this Act; and

7 (B) is not fully staffed with Veterans Justice  
8 Outreach Specialists.

9 (d) REPORTS.—

10 (1) REPORT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AF-  
11 FAIRS.—

12 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year  
13 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the  
14 Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to  
15 Congress a report on the implementation of this  
16 section and its effect on the Veterans Justice  
17 Outreach Program.

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

20 (i) The status of the efforts of the  
21 Secretary to hire Veterans Justice Out-  
22 reach Specialists pursuant to subsection  
23 (a)(1), including the total number of Vet-  
24 erans Justice Outreach Specialists hired by  
25 the Secretary pursuant to such subsection

1 and the number that the Secretary expects  
2 to hire pursuant to such subsection.

3 (ii) The total number of Veterans  
4 Justice Outreach Specialists assigned to  
5 each Department of Veterans Affairs med-  
6 ical center that participates in the Vet-  
7 erans Justice Outreach Program, including  
8 the number of Veterans Justice Outreach  
9 Specialists hired under subsection (a)(1)  
10 disaggregated by Department of Veterans  
11 Affairs medical center.

12 (iii) The total number of eligible De-  
13 partment of Veterans Affairs medical cen-  
14 ters that sought placement of a Veterans  
15 Justice Outreach Specialist under sub-  
16 section (a)(1), how many Veterans Justice  
17 Outreach Specialists each such center  
18 sought, and how many of such medical  
19 centers received no placement of a Vet-  
20 erans Justice Outreach Specialist under  
21 subsection (a)(1).

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

24 (I) the number of justice-involved  
25 veterans who were served or are ex-

pected 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 3 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:

(i) An assessment of whether the Secretary has fulfilled the Secretary's obligations under this section.

(ii) The number of veterans who are served by Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists hired under subsection (a)(1), disaggregated by demographics (including discharge status).

1 (iii) An identification of any sub-  
2 groups of veterans who underutilize serv-  
3 ices provided under laws administered by  
4 the Secretary, including an assessment of  
5 whether these veterans have access to Vet-  
6 erans Justice Outreach Specialists under  
7 the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

8 (iv) Such recommendations as the  
9 Comptroller General may have for the Sec-  
10 retary to improve the effectiveness of the  
11 Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

12 (e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

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

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

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

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

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

17          (6) VETERANS TREATMENT COURT.—The term  
18          “veterans treatment court” means a State or local  
19          court that is participating in the veterans treatment  
20          court program (as defined in section 2991(i)(1) of



1 the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of  
2 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1))).

Passed the House of Representatives June 13, 2018.

Attest: KAREN L. HAAS,  
*Clerk.*

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