

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 5153

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to employ veterans in certain wildland firefighting activities.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 4, 2023

Mr. NEGUSE introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committees on Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to employ veterans in certain wildland firefighting activities.

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. PILOT PROGRAM TO EMPLOY VETERANS IN PO-**  
4 **SITIONS RELATING TO FEDERAL WILDLAND**  
5 **FIREFIGHTING ACTIVITIES.**

6 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans  
7 Affairs, in coordination with the Secretary of Agriculture  
8 and the Secretary of the Interior, shall jointly establish

1 a pilot program to employ veterans in wildland firefighting  
2 activities.

3 (b) DUTIES.—Under such pilot program—

4 (1) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall be  
5 responsible for administering such pilot program;  
6 and

7 (2) the Secretary of Agriculture and the Sec-  
8 retary of the Interior shall be responsible for—

9 (A) identifying vacant positions in the De-  
10 partment of Agriculture and the Department of  
11 the Interior, respectively, that are appropriate  
12 for veterans selected for participation in such  
13 pilot program; and

14 (B) to the extent practicable, employing  
15 such veterans in such positions.

16 (c) APPLICATION OF CIVIL SERVICE LAWS.—A vet-  
17 eran employed under the pilot program under subsection  
18 (a) shall be treated as an employee.

19 (d) BEST PRACTICES.—The Secretary of Veterans  
20 Affairs shall establish guidelines that include best prac-  
21 tices for departments and agencies of the Federal Govern-  
22 ment that carry out programs to employ veterans who are  
23 transitioning from service in the Armed Forces. Such  
24 guidelines shall include—

1 (1) lessons learned under the Warrior Training  
2 Advancement Course of the Department of Veterans  
3 Affairs; and

4 (2) methods to realize cost savings based on  
5 such lessons.

6 (e) PARTNERSHIP.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-  
7 fairs, the Secretaries concerned, and the Secretary of De-  
8 fense may enter into a partnership to include the pilot pro-  
9 gram under subsection (a) as part of the Skillbridge pro-  
10 gram under section 1143 of title 10, United States Code.

11 (f) REPORTS.—

12 (1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 60 days  
13 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
14 retary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretaries con-  
15 cerned shall jointly submit to the appropriate con-  
16 gressional committees a report on the pilot program  
17 under subsection (a), including—

18 (A) a description of how such pilot pro-  
19 gram will be carried out in a manner to reduce  
20 the unemployment of veterans; and

21 (B) any recommendations for legislative  
22 actions to improve such pilot program.

23 (2) IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than one  
24 year after the date on which the Secretary of Vet-  
25 erans Affairs commences such pilot program, such

1 Secretary and the Secretaries concerned shall jointly  
2 submit to the appropriate congressional committees  
3 a report on the implementation of such pilot pro-  
4 gram.

5 (3) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 30 days  
6 after the date on which such pilot program con-  
7 cludes, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the  
8 Secretaries concerned shall jointly submit to the ap-  
9 propriate congressional committees a report that in-  
10 cludes—

11 (A) an identification of—

12 (i) the number of veterans who ap-  
13 plied to participate in such pilot program;

14 (ii) the number of such veterans em-  
15 ployed pursuant to such pilot program; and

16 (iii) the number of veterans described  
17 in clause (ii) who transitioned to full-time  
18 positions with the Federal Government  
19 after participating in such pilot program;  
20 and

21 (B) any other information the Secretaries  
22 determine appropriate with respect to meas-  
23 uring the effectiveness of such pilot program.

24 (g) TERMINATION DATE.—The authority to carry out  
25 the pilot program under subsection (a) shall terminate on

1 the date that is two years after the date on which the Sec-  
2 retary of Veterans Affairs commences such pilot program.

3 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4 (1) The term “appropriate congressional com-  
5 mittees” means the following:

6 (A) The Committee on Agriculture of the  
7 House of Representatives.

8 (B) The Committee on Natural Resources  
9 of the House of Representatives.

10 (C) The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of  
11 the House of Representatives.

12 (D) The Committee on Agriculture, Nutri-  
13 tion, and Forestry of the Senate.

14 (E) The Committee on Energy and Nat-  
15 ural Resources of the Senate.

16 (F) The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs of  
17 the Senate.

18 (2) The term “employee” has the meaning  
19 given such term in section 2105 of title 5, United  
20 States Code.

21 (3) The term “wildland firefighting activities”  
22 means any temporary, seasonal, or permanent posi-  
23 tion at the Department of Agriculture or the De-  
24 partment of the Interior, and Tribal Firefighters,  
25 that maintains group, emergency incident manage-

1        ment, or fire qualifications, as established annually  
2        by the Standards for Wildland Fire Position Quali-  
3        fications published by the National Wildfire Coordi-  
4        nating Group, that primarily engages in or supports  
5        wildland fire management, including forestry and  
6        rangeland technicians and positions concerning avia-  
7        tion, engineering heavy equipment operations, dis-  
8        patch, or fire and fuels management.

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