

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8173

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the connection between living at high altitude and suicide risk factors among veterans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 4, 2020

Mr. MCADAMS (for himself, Mr. CISNEROS, and Mr. TIPTON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the connection between living at high altitude and suicide risk factors among veterans.

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 “VA High Altitude and
5 Suicide Research Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. STUDY ON CONNECTION BETWEEN LIVING AT HIGH**
2 **ALTITUDE AND SUICIDE RISK FACTORS**
3 **AMONG VETERANS.**

4 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 180 days after the
5 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Vet-
6 erans Affairs, in consultation with Rural Health Resource
7 Centers of the Office of Rural Health of the Department
8 of Veterans Affairs, shall commence the conduct of a study
9 on the connection between living at high altitude and the
10 risk of developing depression or dying by suicide among
11 veterans.

12 (b) **COMPLETION OF STUDY.**—The study conducted
13 under subsection (a) shall be completed not later than
14 three years after the date of the commencement of the
15 study.

16 (c) **INDIVIDUAL IMPACT.**—The study conducted
17 under subsection (a) shall be conducted so as to determine
18 the effect of high altitude on suicide risk at the individual
19 level, not at the State or county level, controlling for po-
20 tential confounders including with respect to age, sex,
21 mental health status, and access to firearms.

22 (d) **REPORT.**—Not later than 150 days after the com-
23 pletion of the study conducted under subsection (a), the
24 Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Af-
25 fairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Af-

1 fairs of the House of Representatives a report on the re-
2 sults of the study.

3 (e) FOLLOW-UP STUDY.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—If the Secretary determines
5 through the study conducted under subsection (a)
6 that living at high altitude is a risk factor for devel-
7 oping depression or dying by suicide, the Secretary
8 shall conduct an additional study to identify the fol-
9 lowing:

10 (A) The most likely biological mechanism
11 that makes living at high altitude a risk factor
12 for developing depression or dying by suicide.

13 (B) The most effective treatment or inter-
14 vention for reducing the risk of developing de-
15 pression or dying by suicide associated with liv-
16 ing at high altitude.

17 (2) REPORT.—Not later than 150 days after
18 completing the study conducted under paragraph
19 (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on
20 Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee
21 on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives
22 a report on the results of the study.

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