

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1558

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program of outreach for veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 27, 2013

Mr. BEGICH (for himself and Mr. BROWN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program of outreach for 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 Outreach En-
5 hancement Act of 2013”.

6 **SEC. 2. PROGRAM OF OUTREACH TO VETERANS.**

7 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Vet-
8 erans Affairs shall establish a program of outreach to vet-
9 erans for the purpose described in subsection (b).

1 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose described in this sub-
2 section is to increase the following:

3 (1) The access and use by veterans of Federal,
4 State, and local programs providing compensation
5 and other benefits for service in the Armed Forces.

6 (2) Awareness of such programs by veterans
7 and their eligibility for such programs.

8 (c) DURATION.—The program required by subsection
9 (a) shall be carried out during the five-year period begin-
10 ning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

11 (d) AGREEMENTS TO CARRY OUT PROJECTS AND
12 ACTIVITIES.—

13 (1) AGREEMENTS WITH FEDERAL AND STATE
14 AGENCIES.—In carrying out the program required
15 by subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
16 may enter into agreements with other Federal and
17 State agencies to carry out projects under the juris-
18 diction of such agencies to further the purpose de-
19 scribed in subsection (b).

20 (2) AGREEMENTS WITH APPLICABLE AUTHORI-
21 TIES AND COMMISSIONS.—In carrying out the pro-
22 gram required by subsection (a), the Secretary may
23 enter into agreements with applicable authorities
24 and commissions to provide technical assistance,
25 award grants, enter into contracts, or otherwise pro-

1 vide amounts to persons or entities for projects and
2 activities that—

3 (A) increase outreach to, awareness by,
4 and use by veterans of programs described in
5 subsection (b)(1);

6 (B) provide incentives for State and local
7 governments and veterans service organizations
8 to assist veterans in utilizing facilities and re-
9 sources available to veterans through the De-
10 partment of Veterans Affairs;

11 (C) provide incentives for State and local
12 governments and veterans service organizations
13 to assist veterans in utilizing resources available
14 through government and veterans service orga-
15 nizations for veterans;

16 (D) educate communities and State and
17 local governments about the employment rights
18 of veterans, including the employment and re-
19 employment of members of the uniformed serv-
20 ices under chapter 43 of title 38, United States
21 Code;

22 (E) provide technical assistance to busi-
23 nesses owned by veterans; and

24 (F) encourage and assist nonprofit organi-
25 zations, businesses, and institutions of higher

1 education to carry out programs of assistance
2 designed for veterans.

3 (3) APPLICABLE AUTHORITIES AND COMMIS-
4 SIONS.—For purposes of the program required by
5 subsection (a), the applicable authorities and com-
6 missions are the following:

7 (A) The Appalachian Regional Commis-
8 sion, established under section 14301(a) of title
9 40, United States Code.

10 (B) The Delta Regional Authority, estab-
11 lished under section 382B(a) of the Consoli-
12 dated Farm and Rural Development Act (7
13 U.S.C. 2009aa–1(a)).

14 (C) The Denali Commission, established
15 under section 303 of the Denali Commission
16 Act of 1998 (42 U.S.C. 3121 note).

17 (D) The Northern Great Plains Regional
18 Authority, established under section 383B(a) of
19 the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development
20 Act (7 U.S.C. 2009bb–1(a)).

21 (E) The Southeast Crescent Regional
22 Commission, the Southwest Border Regional
23 Commission, and the Northern Border Regional
24 Commission established under section 15301(a)
25 of title 40, United States Code.

1 (F) Entities described in subparagraph (G)
2 that serve Native Americans, Alaska Natives, or
3 native Hawaiians (as such terms are defined in
4 section 3765 of title 38, United States Code).

5 (G) Commissions and development boards
6 that are—

7 (i) not chartered by the Federal Gov-
8 ernment;

9 (ii) selected by the Secretary for pur-
10 poses of the program; and

11 (iii) located in areas that present ex-
12 traordinary challenges to veterans, as de-
13 termined by the Secretary, including the
14 following:

15 (I) Areas in severe economic dis-
16 tress.

17 (II) Areas with underdeveloped
18 infrastructure.

19 (III) Areas with unusual geo-
20 graphic characteristics, such as sepa-
21 ration from the mainland.

22 (e) INFORMATION, ADVICE, AND TECHNICAL ASSIST-
23 ANCE.—In carrying out the program required by sub-
24 section (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may provide,
25 or contract with public or private organizations to provide,

1 information, advice, and technical assistance to nonprofit
2 organizations that provide services to communities in
3 order to increase the number of veterans receiving such
4 services.

5 (f) REPORT ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPART-
6 MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than four years
8 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
9 retary shall submit to Congress a comprehensive re-
10 port on the activities of the Department of Veterans
11 Affairs regarding outreach to veterans.

12 (2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by para-
13 graph (1) shall include the following:

14 (A) A description of all of the activities of
15 the Department regarding outreach to veterans
16 carried out since the date of the enactment of
17 this Act, including the activities of the Depart-
18 ment carried out under the program required
19 by subsection (a).

20 (B) An assessment of the effectiveness of
21 the activities described in subparagraph (A).

22 (g) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION DEFINED.—

23 In this section, the term “veterans service organization”
24 means any organization recognized by the Secretary of

1 Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under
2 section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

3 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
4 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out the pro-
5 gram required by subsection (a)—

6 (1) \$7,000,000 for fiscal year 2014; and

7 (2) \$35,000,000 for the period of fiscal years
8 2015 through 2019.

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