

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3936

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary carries out Veteran Engagement Team events where veterans can complete claims for disability compensation and pension under the laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 5, 2015

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania (for himself and Mr. FITZPATRICK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary carries out Veteran Engagement Team events where veterans can complete claims for disability compensation and pension under the laws administered by the Secretary, 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 “Veteran Engagement
5 Teams Act” or “VET Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM ON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS**
2 **AFFAIRS VETERAN ENGAGEMENT TEAM**
3 **EVENTS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—

5 (1) PILOT PROGRAM.—Beginning not later than
6 October 1, 2016, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
7 shall carry out a three-year pilot program under
8 which the Secretary shall carry out events, to be
9 known as “Veteran Engagement Team events”. The
10 Secretary shall ensure that such events are carried
11 out—

12 (A) during the first year during which the
13 Secretary carries out the pilot program, at least
14 once a month in a location within the jurisdic-
15 tion of each of 10 regional offices of the De-
16 partment of Veterans Affairs, including at least
17 two regional offices in each of the five districts
18 of the Veterans Benefits Administration under
19 the organization of such Administration in ef-
20 fect as of the date of the enactment of this Act;
21 and

22 (B) during each of the second and third
23 years during which the Secretary carries out
24 the pilot program, at least once a month in a
25 location within the jurisdiction of each of 15 re-

1 regional offices of the Department, including at
2 least three regional offices in each such district.

3 (2) VETERAN ENGAGEMENT TEAM EVENTS.—

4 During each Veteran Engagement Team event, the
5 Secretary shall provide assistance to veterans in
6 completing and adjudicating claims for disability
7 compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United
8 States Code, and for pension under chapter 15 of
9 such title. The Secretary shall ensure that—

10 (A) all Veteran Engagement Team events
11 occur during the normal business hours of the
12 sponsoring regional office;

13 (B) the events are carried out at different
14 locations within the jurisdiction of each regional
15 office and at least 50 miles from any regional
16 office;

17 (C) a sufficient number of physicians (to
18 be available for opinions only), veteran service
19 representatives and rating veteran service rep-
20 resentatives, and other personnel are available
21 at the events to initiate, update, and finalize
22 the completion and adjudication of claims;

23 (D) veterans service organizations have ac-
24 cess to the events for purposes of providing as-
25 sistance to veterans; and

1 (E) a veteran who is unable to complete
2 and adjudicate a claim at an event is informed
3 of what additional information or actions are
4 needed to finalize the claim.

5 (b) LOCATION.—In selecting locations for Veteran
6 Engagement Team events under this section, the Sec-
7 retary shall—

8 (1) coordinate with veteran service organiza-
9 tions and State and local veterans agencies; and

10 (2) seek to select locations that are community-
11 based and easily accessible.

12 (c) TRANSFER OF PERSONNEL.—

13 (1) PHYSICIANS.—The Secretary may not per-
14 manently transfer any physician employed by the
15 Veterans Health Administration for the purpose of
16 staffing a Veteran Engagement Team event.

17 (2) PAYMENT OF SALARIES.—Any amount pay-
18 able to an employee of the Department for work per-
19 formed at a Veteran Engagement Team event is
20 payable only from amounts otherwise available for
21 the payment of the salary of the employee. No addi-
22 tional amounts are authorized to be appropriated
23 under this section for the payment of salaries for
24 Department employee.

1 (d) OTHER AUTHORITIES.—In carrying out the pilot
2 program under this section, the Secretary may—

3 (1) coordinate with States, local governments,
4 nonprofit organizations, and private sector entities
5 to use facilities to host Veteran Engagement Team
6 events for no or minimal costs; and

7 (2) accept, on a without compensation basis,
8 services provided by non-Department physicians in
9 rendering medical opinions relating to claims for
10 compensation and pension.

11 (e) CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS.—In car-
12 rying out the pilot program under this section, the Sec-
13 retary shall collect and analyze information about the cus-
14 tomer satisfaction of veterans who have received assist-
15 ance at an Veteran Engagement Team event.

16 (f) REPORTS.—Not later than April 30, 2017, and
17 annually thereafter beginning on October 1, 2017, for the
18 duration of the program, the Secretary shall submit to
19 Congress a report on the implementation and effectiveness
20 of the events. Such report shall include—

21 (1) the number and types of claims completed
22 and adjudicated at the events;

23 (2) the number and types of claims for which
24 assistance was sought at the events that were not
25 completed or adjudicated at the events and the rea-

1 sons such claims were not completed or adjudicated;
2 and

3 (3) an analysis of the customer satisfaction of
4 veterans who have received assistance at an event
5 based on the information collected under subsection
6 (e).

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