

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H.R. 984
OFFERED BY MR. PAPPAS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

2 This Act may be cited as the “Commitment to Vet-
3 eran Support and Outreach Act”.

**4 SEC. 2. AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AF-
5 FAIRS TO AWARD GRANTS TO STATES AND IN-
6 DIAN TRIBES TO IMPROVE OUTREACH TO
7 VETERANS.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 63 of title 38, United
9 States Code, is amended—

10 (1) by redesignating sections 6307 and 6308
11 and sections 6308 and 6309, respectively; and

12 (2) by inserting after section 6306 the following
13 new section 6307:

**14 “§ 6307. Grants to States and Indian Tribes to im-
15 prove outreach to veterans**

16 “(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to
17 provide for assistance by the Secretary to States and In-
18 dian Tribes to carry out programs that—

1 “(1) improve outreach and assistance to vet-
2 erans and the spouses, children, and parents of vet-
3 erans, to ensure that such individuals are fully in-
4 formed about any veterans and veterans-related ben-
5 efits and programs (including veterans programs of
6 a State or Indian Tribe) for which they may be eligi-
7 ble; and

8 “(2) facilitate opportunities for such individuals
9 to receive competent, qualified services in the prepa-
10 ration, presentation, and prosecution of veterans
11 benefits claims.

12 “(b) **AUTHORITY.**—The Secretary may award grants
13 under this section to States and Indian Tribes—

14 “(1) to carry out, coordinate, improve, or other-
15 wise enhance outreach activities;

16 “(2) to increase the number of county or Tribal
17 veterans service officers serving in the State or In-
18 dian Tribe by hiring new, additional such officers; or

19 “(3) to expand, carry out, coordinate, improve,
20 or otherwise enhance existing programs, activities,
21 and services of the existing organization of the State
22 or Indian Tribe that has been recognized by the De-
23 partment of Veterans Affairs pursuant to section
24 5902, in the preparation, presentation, and prosecu-
25 tion of claims for veterans benefits through rep-

1 representatives who hold positions as county or Tribal
2 veterans service officers.

3 “(c) APPLICATION.—(1) To be eligible for a grant
4 under this section, a State or Indian Tribe shall submit
5 to the Secretary an application therefor at such time, in
6 such manner, and containing such information as the Sec-
7 retary may require.

8 “(2) Each application submitted under paragraph (1)
9 shall include the following:

10 “(A) A detailed plan for the use of the grant.

11 “(B) A description of the programs through
12 which the State or Indian Tribe will meet the out-
13 come measures developed by the Secretary under
14 subsection (j).

15 “(C) A description of how the State or Indian
16 Tribe will distribute grant amounts equitably among
17 counties (or Tribal lands, as the case may be) with
18 varying levels of urbanization.

19 “(D) A plan for how the grant will be used to
20 meet the unique needs of American Indian or Alaska
21 Native veterans, elderly veterans, women veterans,
22 and veterans from other underserved communities.

23 “(d) DISTRIBUTION.—The Secretary shall seek to en-
24 sure that grants awarded under this section are equitably

1 distributed among States and Indian Tribes with varying
2 levels of urbanization.

3 “(e) SET-ASIDE.—Of the amounts authorized to be
4 appropriated or otherwise made available for grants under
5 this section for any fiscal year, the Secretary shall ensure
6 that not less than five percent is used to make grants to
7 Indian tribes.

8 “(f) PRIORITY.—The Secretary shall prioritize
9 awarding grants under this section that will serve the fol-
10 lowing areas:

11 “(1) Areas with a critical shortage of county or
12 Tribal veterans service officers.

13 “(2) Areas with high rates of—

14 “(A) suicide among veterans; or

15 “(B) referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.

16 “(g) USE OF COUNTY OR TRIBAL VETERANS SERV-
17 ICE OFFICERS.—A State or Indian Tribe that receives a
18 grant under this section to carry out an activity described
19 in subsection (b)(1) may only carry out the activity
20 through—

21 “(1) a county or Tribal veterans service officer
22 of the State or Indian Tribe; or

23 “(2) if the State or Indian Tribe does not have
24 a county or Tribal veterans service officer, or if the
25 county or Tribal veterans service officers of the

1 State or Indian Tribe cover only a portion of that
2 State or Indian Tribe, an appropriate entity of a
3 State, local, or Tribal government, as determined by
4 the Secretary.

5 “(h) REQUIRED ACTIVITIES.—Any grant awarded
6 under this section shall be used—

7 “(1) to expand existing programs, activities,
8 and services;

9 “(2) to hire and maintain new, additional coun-
10 ty or Tribal veterans service officers; or

11 “(3) for travel and transportation to facilitate
12 carrying out paragraph (1) or (2).

13 “(i) OTHER PERMISSIBLE ACTIVITIES.—A grant
14 under this section may be used to provide education and
15 training, including on-the-job training, for State, county,
16 local, and Tribal government employees who provide (or
17 when trained will provide) veterans outreach services in
18 order for those employees to obtain and maintain accredi-
19 tation in accordance with procedures approved by the Sec-
20 retary.

21 “(j) OUTCOME MEASURES.—(1) The Secretary shall
22 develop and provide to each State or Indian Tribe that
23 receives a grant under this section written guidance on
24 the following:

25 “(A) Outcome measures.

1 “(B) Policies of the Department.

2 “(2) In developing outcome measures under para-
3 graph (1), the Secretary shall consider the following goals:

4 “(A) Increasing the use of veterans and vet-
5 erans-related benefits, particularly among vulnerable
6 populations.

7 “(B) Increasing the number of county and
8 Tribal veterans service officers recognized by the
9 Secretary for the representation of veterans under
10 chapter 59 of this title.

11 “(k) TRACKING REQUIREMENTS.—(1) With respect
12 to each grant awarded under this section, the Secretary
13 shall track the use of veterans benefits among the popu-
14 lation served by the grant, including the average period
15 of time between the date on which a veteran or other eligi-
16 ble claimant applies for such a benefit and the date on
17 which the veteran or other eligible claimant receives the
18 benefit, disaggregated by type of benefit.

19 “(2) Not less frequently than annually during the life
20 of the grant program established under this section, the
21 Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on—

22 “(A) the information tracked under paragraph
23 (1);

24 “(B) how the grants awarded under this section
25 serve the unique needs of American Indian or Alaska

1 Native veterans, elderly veterans, women veterans,
2 and veterans from other underserved communities;
3 and

4 “(C) other information provided by States and
5 Indian Tribes pursuant to the grant reporting re-
6 quirements.

7 “(1) PERFORMANCE REVIEW.—The Secretary shall—

8 “(1) review the performance of each State or
9 Indian Tribe that receives a grant under this sec-
10 tion; and

11 “(2) make information regarding such perform-
12 ance publicly available.

13 “(m) REMEDIATION PLAN.—(1) In the case of a
14 State or Indian Tribe that receives a grant under this sec-
15 tion and does not meet the outcome measures developed
16 by the Secretary under subsection (j), the Secretary shall
17 require the State or Indian Tribe to submit a remediation
18 plan under which the State or Indian Tribe shall describe
19 how and when it plans to meet such outcome measures.

20 “(2) The Secretary may not award a subsequent
21 grant under this section to a State or Indian Tribe de-
22 scribed in paragraph (1) unless the Secretary approves the
23 remediation plan submitted by the State of Indian Tribe.

24 “(n) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The amount of a grant
25 awarded under this section may not exceed 10 percent of

1 amounts made available for grants under this section for
2 the fiscal year in which the grant is awarded.

3 “(o) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT.—Any grant
4 awarded under this section shall be used to supplement
5 and not supplant State and local funding that is otherwise
6 available.

7 “(p) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

8 “(1) The term ‘county or Tribal veterans serv-
9 ice officer’ includes a local equivalent veterans serv-
10 ice officer.

11 “(2) The term ‘Indian Tribe’ has the meaning
12 given such term in section 4 of the Indian Self-De-
13 termination and Education Assistance Act (25
14 U.S.C. 5304).

15 “(3) The term ‘State’ includes the District of
16 Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the
17 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands,
18 and any territory or possession of the United States.

19 “(4) The term ‘Veterans Crisis Line’ means the
20 toll-free hotline for veterans established under sec-
21 tion 1720F(h) of this title.”.

22 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
23 at the beginning of chapter 63 of such title is amended
24 by striking the items relating to sections 6307 and 6308
25 and inserting the following new items:

“6307. Grants to States and Indian Tribes to improve outreach to veterans.

“6308. Outreach for eligible dependents.

“6309. Biennial report to Congress.”.

1 (c) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is
2 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans
3 Affairs for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028,
4 \$20,000,000 to carry out section 6307 of title 38, United
5 States Code, as added by subsection (a).

6 (d) **AUTHORIZATION OF ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME**
7 **EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEE.**—During fiscal years 2024
8 through 2028, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may hire
9 two or more additional full-time equivalent employees in
10 the Office of the General Counsel of the Department of
11 Veterans Affairs, as compared to the number of full-time
12 equivalent employees that would otherwise be authorized
13 for such office, to carry out duties under the accreditation,
14 discipline, and fees program.

15 (e) **NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY.**—Not later
16 than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act,
17 the Secretary shall issue a notice of funding availability
18 for grants available under section 6307 of title 38, United
19 States Code, as added by subsection (a).

20 **SEC. 3. MODIFICATION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AF-**
21 **FAIRS HOUSING LOAN FEES.**

22 The loan fee table in section 3729(b)(2) of title 38,
23 United States Code, is amended by striking “November

- 1 14, 2031” each place it appears and inserting “December,
- 2 31 2031”.

