

**Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H.R. 3936**

**(The amendment strikes all after the enacting clause and inserts a new text)**

114<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
1<sup>ST</sup> 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,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Veteran Engagement  
3 Teams Act” or “VET Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM ON DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS**

5 **AFFAIRS VETERAN ENGAGEMENT TEAM**  
6 **EVENTS.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—

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

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

25 (B) during each of the second and third  
26 years during which the Secretary carries out

1 the pilot program, at least once a month in a  
2 location within the jurisdiction of each of 15 re-  
3 gional offices of the Department, including at  
4 least three regional offices in each such district.

5 (2) VETERAN ENGAGEMENT TEAM EVENTS.—

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

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

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

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

1 (D) veterans service organizations have ac-  
2 cess to the events for purposes of providing as-  
3 sistance to veterans; and

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

8 (b) LOCATION.—In selecting locations for Veteran  
9 Engagement Team events under this section, the Sec-  
10 retary shall—

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

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

15 (c) TRANSFER OF PERSONNEL.—

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

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

1 under this section for the payment of salaries for  
2 Department employee.

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

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

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

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

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

23 (1) the number and types of claims completed  
24 and adjudicated at the events;

1           (2) the number and types of claims for which  
2           assistance was sought at the events that were not  
3           completed or adjudicated at the events and the rea-  
4           sons such claims were not completed or adjudicated;  
5           and

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

10 **SEC. 3. MODIFICATION TO LIMITATION ON AWARDS AND**  
11 **BONUSES.**

12           Section 705 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Ac-  
13           countability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 38 U.S.C.  
14           703 note) is amended to read as follows:

15 **“SEC. 705. LIMITATION ON AWARDS AND BONUSES PAID TO**  
16 **EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS**  
17 **AFFAIRS.**

18           “The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that  
19           the aggregate amount of awards and bonuses paid by the  
20           Secretary in a fiscal year under chapter 45 or 53 of title  
21           5, United States Code, or any other awards or bonuses  
22           authorized under such title or title 38, United States  
23           Code, does not exceed the following amounts:

24           “(1) With respect to fiscal year 2017,  
25           \$250,000,000.

- 1           “(2) With respect to each of fiscal years 2018
- 2           through 2024, \$360,000,000.”.