

Union Calendar No.

115TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 2147

[Report No. 115-]

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to provide treatment court services to justice-involved veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 26, 2017

Mr. COFFMAN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

MAY --, 2018

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italics]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on April 26, 2017]

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists to provide treatment court services to justice-involved 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 Treatment*
5 *Court Improvement Act of 2018”.*

6 **SEC. 2. HIRING BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF**
7 **ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH**
8 **SPECIALISTS.**

9 *(a) HIRING OF ADDITIONAL VETERANS JUSTICE OUT-*
10 *REACH SPECIALISTS.—*

11 *(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after*
12 *the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of*
13 *Veterans Affairs shall hire not fewer than 50 Veterans*
14 *Justice Outreach Specialists and place each such Vet-*
15 *erans Justice Outreach Specialist at an eligible De-*
16 *partment of Veterans Affairs medical center in ac-*
17 *cordance with this section.*

18 *(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall ensure*
19 *that each Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist em-*
20 *ployed under paragraph (1)—*

21 *(A) serves, either exclusively or in addition*
22 *to other duties, as part of a justice team in a*
23 *veterans treatment court or other veteran-focused*
24 *court; and*

1 (B) otherwise meets Department hiring
2 guidelines for Veterans Justice Outreach Special-
3 ists.

4 (b) *ELIGIBLE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS*
5 *MEDICAL CENTERS.*—For purposes of this section, an eligi-
6 ble Department of Veterans Affairs medical center is any
7 Department of Veterans Affairs medical center that—

8 (1) complies with all Department guidelines and
9 regulations for placement of a Veterans Justice Out-
10 reach Specialist;

11 (2) works within a local criminal justice system
12 with justice-involved veterans;

13 (3) maintains an affiliation with one or more
14 veterans treatment courts or other veteran-focused
15 courts; and

16 (4) either—

17 (A) routinely provides Veterans Justice
18 Outreach Specialists to serve as part of a justice
19 team in a veterans treatment court or other vet-
20 eran-focused court; or

21 (B) establishes a plan that is approved by
22 the Secretary to provide Veterans Justice Out-
23 reach Specialists employed under subsection
24 (a)(1) to serve as part of a justice team in a vet-

1 *erans treatment court or other veteran-focused*
2 *court.*

3 (c) *PLACEMENT PRIORITY.*—*The Secretary shall*
4 *prioritize the placement of Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-*
5 *cialists employed under subsection (a)(1) at eligible Depart-*
6 *ment of Veterans Affairs medical centers that have or intend*
7 *to establish an affiliation, for the purpose of carrying out*
8 *the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, with a veterans*
9 *treatment court, or other veteran-focused court, that—*

10 (1) *was established on or after the date of the en-*
11 *actment of this Act; or*

12 (2)(A) *was established before the date of the en-*
13 *actment of this Act; and*

14 (B) *is not fully staffed with Veterans Justice*
15 *Outreach Specialists.*

16 (d) *REPORTS.*—

17 (1) *REPORT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AF-*
18 *FAIRS.*—

19 (A) *IN GENERAL.*—*Not later than one year*
20 *after the date of the enactment of this Act, the*
21 *Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to*
22 *Congress a report on the implementation of this*
23 *section and its effect on the Veterans Justice*
24 *Outreach Program.*

1 (B) *CONTENTS.*—*The report submitted*
2 *under paragraph (1) shall include the following:*

3 (i) *The status of the efforts of the Sec-*
4 *retary to hire Veterans Justice Outreach*
5 *Specialists pursuant to subsection (a)(1),*
6 *including the total number of Veterans Jus-*
7 *tice Outreach Specialists hired by the Sec-*
8 *retary pursuant to such subsection and the*
9 *number that the Secretary expects to hire*
10 *pursuant to such subsection.*

11 (ii) *The total number of Veterans Jus-*
12 *tice Outreach Specialists assigned to each*
13 *Department of Veterans Affairs medical*
14 *center that participates in the Veterans Jus-*
15 *tice Outreach Program, including the num-*
16 *ber of Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists*
17 *hired under subsection (a)(1) disaggregated*
18 *by Department of Veterans Affairs medical*
19 *center.*

20 (iii) *The total number of eligible De-*
21 *partment of Veterans Affairs medical cen-*
22 *ters that sought placement of a Veterans*
23 *Justice Outreach Specialist under sub-*
24 *section (a)(1), how many Veterans Justice*
25 *Outreach Specialists each such center*

1 sought, and how many of such medical cen-
2 ters received no placement of a Veterans
3 Justice Outreach Specialist under sub-
4 section (a)(1).

5 (iv) For each eligible Department of
6 Veterans Affairs medical center—

7 (I) the number of justice-involved
8 veterans who were served or are ex-
9 pected to be served by a Veterans Jus-
10 tice Outreach Specialist hired under
11 subsection (a)(1); and

12 (II) the number of justice-involved
13 veterans who do not have access to a
14 Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist.

15 (2) *REPORT BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE*
16 *UNITED STATES.—*

17 (A) *IN GENERAL.—*Not later than three
18 years after the date of the enactment of this Act,
19 the Comptroller General of the United States
20 shall submit to Congress a report on the imple-
21 mentation of this section and the effectiveness of
22 the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.

23 (B) *CONTENTS.—*The report required by
24 subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

1 (i) *An assessment of whether the Sec-*
2 *retary has fulfilled the Secretary’s obliga-*
3 *tions under this section.*

4 (ii) *The number of veterans who are*
5 *served by Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-*
6 *cialists hired under subsection (a)(1),*
7 *disaggregated by demographics (including*
8 *discharge status).*

9 (iii) *An identification of any sub-*
10 *groups of veterans who underutilize services*
11 *provided under laws administered by the*
12 *Secretary, including an assessment of*
13 *whether these veterans have access to Vet-*
14 *erans Justice Outreach Specialists under*
15 *the Veterans Justice Outreach Program.*

16 (iv) *Such recommendations as the*
17 *Comptroller General may have for the Sec-*
18 *retary to improve the effectiveness of the*
19 *Veterans Justice Outreach Program.*

20 (e) *DEFINITIONS.—In this section:*

21 (1) *JUSTICE TEAM.—The term “justice team”*
22 *means the group of individuals, which may include a*
23 *judge, court coordinator, prosecutor, public defender,*
24 *treatment provider, probation or other law enforce-*
25 *ment officer, program mentor, and Veterans Justice*

1 *Outreach Specialist, who assist justice-involved vet-*
2 *erans in a veterans treatment court or other veteran-*
3 *focused court.*

4 (2) *JUSTICE-INVOLVED VETERAN.*—*The term*
5 *“justice-involved veteran” means a veteran with ac-*
6 *tive, ongoing, or recent contact with some component*
7 *of a local criminal justice system.*

8 (3) *LOCAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.*—*The*
9 *term “local criminal justice system” means law en-*
10 *forcement, jails, prisons, and Federal, State, and local*
11 *courts.*

12 (4) *VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH PROGRAM.*—
13 *The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Program”*
14 *means the program through which the Department of*
15 *Veterans Affairs identifies justice-involved veterans*
16 *and provides such veterans with access to Department*
17 *services.*

18 (5) *VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH SPE-*
19 *CIALIST.*—*The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-*
20 *cialist” means an employee of the Department of Vet-*
21 *erans Affairs who serves as a liaison between the De-*
22 *partment and the local criminal justice system on be-*
23 *half of a justice-involved veteran.*

24 (6) *VETERANS TREATMENT COURT.*—*The term*
25 *“veterans treatment court” means a State or local*

1 *court that is participating in the veterans treatment*
2 *court program (as defined in section 2991(i)(1) of the*
3 *Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968*
4 *(42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1))).*