

Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H.R. 3749, with An Amendment

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

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3749

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants to entities that provide legal services for homeless veterans and veterans at risk for homelessness, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 16, 2019

Mr. PANETTA (for himself, Mr. CISNEROS, Mr. STEUBE, Mr. MAST, Mr. WALTZ, and Mr. BACON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants to entities that provide legal services for homeless veterans and veterans at risk for homelessness, 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 “Legal Services for
5 Homeless Veterans Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. LEGAL SERVICES FOR HOMELESS VETERANS AND**
2 **VETERANS AT RISK FOR HOMELESSNESS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 20 of title 38, United
4 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 2022
5 the following new section:

6 **“§ 2022A. Legal services for homeless veterans and**
7 **veterans at risk for homelessness**

8 “(a) GRANTS.—Subject to the availability of appro-
9 priations provided for such purpose, the Secretary of Vet-
10 erans Affairs shall make grants to eligible entities that
11 provide legal services to homeless veterans and veterans
12 at risk for homelessness.

13 “(b) CRITERIA.—(1) The Secretary shall—

14 “(A) establish criteria and requirements for
15 grants under this section, including criteria for enti-
16 ties eligible to receive such grants; and

17 “(B) publish such criteria and requirements in
18 the Federal Register.

19 “(2) In establishing criteria and requirements under
20 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

21 “(A) take into consideration any criteria and
22 requirements needed with respect to carrying out
23 this section in rural communities, Tribal lands, and
24 the territories and possessions of the United States;
25 and

1 “(B) consult with organizations that have expe-
2 rience in providing services to homeless veterans, in-
3 cluding veterans service organizations, the Equal
4 Justice Works AmeriCorps Veterans Legal Corps,
5 and other organizations the Secretary determines
6 appropriate.

7 “(c) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—The Secretary may make
8 a grant under this section to an entity applying for such
9 a grant only if the applicant for the grant—

10 “(1) is a public or nonprofit private entity with
11 the capacity (as determined by the Secretary) to ef-
12 fectively administer a grant under this section;

13 “(2) demonstrates that adequate financial sup-
14 port will be available to carry out the services for
15 which the grant is sought consistent with the appli-
16 cation;

17 “(3) agrees to meet the applicable criteria and
18 requirements established under subsection (b)(1);
19 and

20 “(4) has, as determined by the Secretary, dem-
21 onstrated the capacity to meet such criteria and re-
22 quirements.

23 “(d) USE OF FUNDS.—Grants under this section
24 shall be used to provide homeless veterans and veterans
25 at risk for homelessness the following legal services:

1 “(1) Legal services related to housing, including
2 eviction defense, representation in landlord-tenant
3 cases, and representation in foreclosure cases.

4 “(2) Legal services related to family law, in-
5 cluding assistance in court proceedings for child sup-
6 port, divorce, estate planning, and family reconcili-
7 ation.

8 “(3) Legal services related to income support,
9 including assistance in obtaining public benefits.

10 “(4) Legal services related to criminal defense,
11 including defense in matters symptomatic of home-
12 lessness, such as outstanding warrants, fines, and
13 driver’s license revocation, to reduce recidivism and
14 facilitate the overcoming of reentry obstacles in em-
15 ployment or housing.

16 “(5) Legal services related to requests to up-
17 grade the characterization of a discharge or dis-
18 missal of a former member of the Armed Forces
19 under section 1553 of title 10.

20 “(6) Such other legal services as the Secretary
21 determines appropriate.

22 “(e) FUNDS FOR WOMEN VETERANS.—For any fiscal
23 year, not less than ten percent of the amount authorized
24 to be appropriated for grants under this section shall be

1 used to provide legal services described in subsection (d)
2 to women veterans.

3 “(f) REPORTS.—On a biennial basis, the Secretary
4 shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of
5 the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on
6 grants under this section. To the extent feasible, each such
7 report shall include the following with respect to the year
8 covered by the report:

9 “(1) The number of homeless veterans and vet-
10 erans at risk for homelessness assisted.

11 “(2) A description of the legal services pro-
12 vided.

13 “(3) A description of the legal matters ad-
14 dressed.

15 “(4) An analysis by the Secretary with respect
16 to the operational effectiveness and cost-effectiveness
17 of the services provided.”.

18 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
19 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting
20 after the item relating to section 2022 the following new
21 item:

“2022A. Legal services for homeless veterans and veterans at risk for homeles-
ness.”.

22 (c) CRITERIA.—Not later than 180 days after the
23 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Vet-
24 erans Affairs shall establish the criteria and requirements

1 in the Federal Register pursuant to subsection (b)(1) of
2 section 2022A of title 38, United States Code, as added
3 by subsection (a).

4 **SEC. 3. ADDITIONAL AMOUNT FOR SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**
5 **FOR VETERAN FAMILIES GRANT PROGRAM**
6 **TO SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE A**
7 **FOCUS ON PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO**
8 **WOMEN VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

9 Section 2044(e) of title 38, United States Code, is
10 amended by adding at the end the following new para-
11 graph:

12 “(4) There is authorized to be appropriated
13 \$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through
14 2024 for the provision of financial assistance under
15 subsection (a) to organizations that have a focus on
16 providing assistance to women veterans and their
17 families.”.

18 **SEC. 4. GAP ANALYSIS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AF-**
19 **FAIRS PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE ASSIST-**
20 **ANCE TO WOMEN VETERANS WHO ARE HOME-**
21 **LESS.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
23 shall complete an analysis of programs of the Department
24 of Veterans Affairs that provide assistance to women vet-
25 erans who are homeless or precariously housed to identify

1 the areas in which such programs are failing to meet the
2 needs of such women.

3 (b) REPORT.—Not later than 270 days after the date
4 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit
5 to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and
6 the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Rep-
7 resentatives a report on the analysis completed under sub-
8 section (a).