

Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H.R. 1257, with Amendments

(The amendments strike all after the enacting clause and insert a new text and a new title)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1257

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the effect of financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 23, 2021

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

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the effect of financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability.

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 “Homeless Veterans
5 Credit Repair, Enhancement, and Debt Improvement for

1 Tomorrow Act” or the “Homeless Veterans CREDIT
2 Act”.

3 **SEC. 2. STUDY ON FINANCIAL AND CREDIT COUNSELING.**

4 (a) STUDY REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans
5 Affairs shall conduct a comprehensive study on—

6 (1) the use of and variation of financial and
7 credit counseling services available for homeless vet-
8 erans and veterans experiencing housing instability;

9 (2) barriers to accessing financial and credit
10 counseling for such veterans; and

11 (3) the ability to evaluate and assess the poten-
12 tial effects of financial and credit counseling for
13 such veterans with respect to housing, employment,
14 income, and other outcomes the Secretary deter-
15 mines appropriate.

16 (b) METHODOLOGY.—In conducting the study under
17 subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

18 (1) survey—

19 (A) homeless veterans and veterans experi-
20 encing housing instability who are enrolled in
21 the Supportive Services for Veterans Families
22 program;

23 (B) such veterans who do not seek or re-
24 ceive the care or services under such program
25 or a similar program;

1 (C) grantees of the Supportive Services for
2 Veterans Families program;

3 (D) financial and credit counselors; and

4 (E) persons who are subject matter experts
5 regarding the use of financial and credit coun-
6 seling services that the Secretary determines
7 appropriate; and

8 (2) administer the survey to a representative
9 sample of homeless veterans and veterans experi-
10 encing housing instability in areas with high veteran
11 homelessness.

12 (c) USE AND VARIATION OF SERVICES.—In con-
13 ducting the study under subsection (a)(1), the Secretary
14 shall—

15 (1) use data from the Supportive Services for
16 Veterans Families program and other data collected
17 by the Department of Veterans Affairs, data col-
18 lected by other departments or agencies of the Fed-
19 eral Government, and data collected by nongovern-
20 mental entities to compare the use of and variation
21 of financial and credit counseling services available
22 for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing
23 housing instability and such use and variation for
24 other individuals; and

1 (2) assess such services made available through
2 the Supportive Services for Veterans Families pro-
3 gram, including with respect to the types, modes of
4 delivery, duration, consistency, and quality, of such
5 services.

6 (d) BARRIERS TO COUNSELING.—In conducting the
7 study under subsection (a)(2), the Secretary shall conduct
8 research on the effects of the following perceived barriers
9 to financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans
10 and veterans experiencing housing instability surveyed in
11 the study:

12 (1) The cost of financial and credit counseling
13 services.

14 (2) The perceived stigma associated with seek-
15 ing financial and credit counseling assistance.

16 (3) The effect of driving distance or availability
17 of other forms of transportation to the nearest facil-
18 ity that received a grant under the Supportive Serv-
19 ices for Veterans Families program.

20 (4) The availability of child care.

21 (5) The comprehension of eligibility require-
22 ments for, and the scope of services available under,
23 the Supportive Services for Veterans Families pro-
24 gram.

1 (6) The effectiveness of outreach for the serv-
2 ices available to such veterans under the Supportive
3 Services for Veterans Families program.

4 (7) The location and operating hours of facili-
5 ties that provide services to such veterans under the
6 Supportive Services for Veterans Families program.

7 (8) The COVID–19 pandemic and other health
8 related issues.

9 (9) Such other significant barriers as the Sec-
10 retary considers appropriate.

11 (e) EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS OF
12 COUNSELING.—

13 (1) EFFECTS.—In conducting the study under
14 subsection (a)(3), the Secretary shall conduct re-
15 search on the ability to evaluate and assess the po-
16 tential effects of financial and credit counseling serv-
17 ices on homeless veterans and veterans experiencing
18 housing instability with respect to the following:

19 (A) The effects of such services on employ-
20 ment by comparing the veterans who received
21 such services and the veterans who did not re-
22 ceive such services.

23 (B) The effects of such services on housing
24 status by comparing the veterans who received

1 such services and the veterans who did not re-
2 ceive such services.

3 (C) The effects of such services on income
4 by comparing the veterans who received such
5 services and the veterans who did not receive
6 such services.

7 (D) The effects of such services on credit
8 score by comparing the veterans who received
9 such services and the veterans who did not re-
10 ceive such services.

11 (E) The effects of such services on other
12 outcomes the Secretary determines appropriate.

13 (2) DATA AND RECOMMENDATIONS.—In car-
14 rying out paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

15 (A) determine the relevant data that is
16 available to the Secretary and determine the
17 confidence of the Secretary with respect to ac-
18 cessing any additional data the Secretary may
19 require; and

20 (B) provide recommendations regarding
21 the optimal research or evaluation design that
22 would generate the greatest insights and value.

23 (f) DISCHARGE BY CONTRACT.—The Secretary may
24 seek to enter into a contract with a qualified independent
25 entity or organization to carry out the study and research

1 required under this section, including such an entity or
2 organization that is able to access credit scores, data
3 maintained by the Internal Revenue Service, and other
4 data beneficial to studying income.

5 (g) MANDATORY REVIEW OF DATA BY CERTAIN
6 ELEMENTS OF DEPARTMENT.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ensure
8 that the head of each element of the Department of
9 Veterans Affairs specified in paragraph (2) reviews
10 the results of the study conducted under subsection
11 (a). The head of each such element shall submit to
12 the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Oper-
13 ations and Management the findings of the head
14 with respect to the study, including recommenda-
15 tions regarding what data the Secretary should col-
16 lect from grantees under the Supportive Services for
17 Veterans Families program.

18 (2) SPECIFIED ELEMENTS.—The elements of
19 the Department of Veterans Affairs specified in this
20 paragraph are the following:

21 (A) The Advisory Committee on Homeless
22 Veterans established under section 2066 of title
23 38, United States Code.

1 (B) The Advisory Committee on Women
2 Veterans established under section 542 of title
3 38, United States Code.

4 (C) The Advisory Committee on Minority
5 Veterans established under section 544 of title
6 38, United States Code.

7 (D) The Homeless Programs Office of the
8 Veterans Health Administration.

9 (E) The Office of Tribal Government Rela-
10 tions of the Department.

11 (h) REPORTS.—

12 (1) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than one year
13 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
14 retary shall submit to Congress an interim report on
15 the study under subsection (a).

16 (2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 30 months
17 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
18 retary shall submit to Congress a report on the
19 study under subsection (a). The report shall in-
20 clude—

21 (A) the findings of the head of each ele-
22 ment of the Department specified under sub-
23 section (g)(2); and

1 (B) recommendations for such administra-
2 tive and legislative action as the Secretary con-
3 siders appropriate.

4 (i) DEFINITION.—In this section:

5 (1) The term “homeless veterans and veterans
6 experiencing housing instability” means veterans
7 who are homeless (as that term is defined in sub-
8 section (a) or (b) of section 103 of the McKinney–
9 Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302)).

10 (2) The term “Supportive Services for Veterans
11 Families program” means the program established
12 pursuant to section 2044 of title 38, United States
13 Code.

14 **SEC. 3. TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.**

15 (a) TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.—Title 38,
16 United States Code, is amended as follows:

17 (1) In section 1786(d), as added by section
18 3006 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe,
19 M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improve-
20 ment Act of 2020 (Public Law 116–315), by strik-
21 ing paragraph (3).

22 (2) In section 3673(f), as added by section
23 1023 of such Act, by striking paragraph (3).

24 (b) JOHNNY ISAKSON AND DAVID P. ROE, M.D. VET-
25 ERANS HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT ACT

1 OF 2020.—The Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D.
2 Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of
3 2020 (Public Law 116–315) is amended as follows:

4 (1) In section 3010—

5 (A) in subsection (a), by striking “The
6 Secretary” and inserting “Subject to the avail-
7 ability of appropriations for such purpose, the
8 Secretary”; and

9 (B) by striking subsection (h).

10 (2) In section 4201(a), by adding at the end
11 the following new paragraph:

12 “(3) USE OF AUTHORITY.—The Secretary shall
13 ensure that paragraph (1) is carried out in accord-
14 ance with established procedures for
15 reprogrammings or transfers, including with respect
16 to presenting a request for a reprogramming of
17 funds.”.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the effect of financial and credit counseling for homeless veterans and veterans experiencing housing instability, and for other purposes.”.