

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
TO H.R. 5529  
OFFERED BY MRS. MILLER-MEEKS OF IOWA**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

**1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2       This Act may be cited as the “Veterans Justice Out-  
3 reach Improvement Act”.

**4 SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENTS TO VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH  
5 PROGRAM.**

6       (a) **OUTREACH REQUIREMENT.**—The Secretary of  
7 Veterans Affairs shall conduct outreach regarding the Vet-  
8 erans Justice Outreach Program to justice-involved vet-  
9 erans, military and veterans service organizations, and rel-  
10 evant stakeholders in the criminal justice community, in-  
11 cluding officials from local law enforcement, court, and jail  
12 systems and others as determined appropriate by the Sec-  
13 retary. Such outreach—

14               (1) shall be designed—

15                       (A) to spread awareness and under-  
16 standing of the Program;

17                       (B) to spread awareness and under-  
18 standing of veteran eligibility for the Program,

1 including the eligibility of veterans who were  
2 discharged from service in the Armed Forces  
3 under conditions other than honorable; and

4 (C) to improve the identification of justice-  
5 involved veterans; and

6 (2) may be conducted in person, virtually, or  
7 through other means, including by the dissemination  
8 of informational materials and contact information.

9 (b) STRATEGIC PLAN.—The Secretary of Veterans  
10 Affairs shall develop a strategic plan for the Veterans Jus-  
11 tice Outreach Program. In developing such plan, the Sec-  
12 retary shall conduct—

13 (1) an assessment of barriers to working with  
14 justice-involved veterans in rural, remote, and under-  
15 served areas, including potential steps to address  
16 such barriers; and

17 (2) a workforce gap analysis for the Program.

18 (c) INCREASE IN NUMBER OF VJO SPECIALISTS.—

19 (1) INCREASE.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-  
20 fairs shall increase the number of Veterans Justice  
21 Outreach specialists responsible for supporting jus-  
22 tice-involved veterans in rural, remote, or under-  
23 served areas, including areas located far from De-  
24 partment of Veterans Affairs medical centers, as de-  
25 termined by the Secretary, through—

1 (A) the hiring of additional Veterans Jus-  
2 tice Outreach specialists;

3 (B) the reallocation of existing Veterans  
4 Justice Outreach specialists; or

5 (C) such other means as may be deter-  
6 mined appropriate by the Secretary.

7 (2) DETERMINATION.—The Secretary shall de-  
8 termine the number of Veterans Justice Outreach  
9 specialists required, and the locations of such spe-  
10 cialists, under paragraph (1) by taking into ac-  
11 count—

12 (A) such number and locations needed to  
13 achieve the mission and strategic goals of the  
14 Veterans Justice Outreach Program;

15 (B) any gaps in the workforce of the Pro-  
16 gram, including such gaps identified pursuant  
17 to subsection (b)(2); and

18 (C) strategies to address such gaps.

19 (3) USE OF TECHNOLOGY.—In carrying out  
20 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consider the use  
21 of virtual technology.

22 (d) PERFORMANCE GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION  
23 PLANS.—

1           (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Vet-  
2           erans Affairs shall establish performance goals and  
3           implementation plans for—

4                   (A) the Veterans Justice Outreach Pro-  
5           gram;

6                   (B) Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists;  
7           and

8                   (C) providing support for research regard-  
9           ing justice-involved veterans.

10          (2) CONSISTENCY WITH STRATEGIC PLAN.—

11          The Secretary shall ensure that the performance  
12          goals and implementation plans under paragraph (1)  
13          are consistent with the strategic plan under sub-  
14          section (b) and include—

15                   (A) qualitative and quantitative milestones,  
16          measures, and metrics, and associated timelines  
17          for completion of the plans under paragraph (1)  
18          and barriers to such completion;

19                   (B) an identification of relevant staff; and

20                   (C) an estimate of resource needs and  
21          sources.

22          (3) PERFORMANCE DATA.—The Secretary shall

23          establish a process to regularly collect and analyze  
24          performance data to assess the efficiency and effec-

1 tiveness of implementing the plans under paragraph  
2 (1).

3 (e) TRAINING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall  
4 ensure that all Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists re-  
5 ceive training not less frequently than annually on—

6 (1) best practices for identifying and con-  
7 ducting outreach to justice-involved veterans and rel-  
8 evant stakeholders in the criminal justice commu-  
9 nity; and

10 (2) veteran eligibility for the Veterans Justice  
11 Outreach Program, including with respect to consist-  
12 ently communicating changes regarding eligibility  
13 (including through the use of a script or other ref-  
14 erence materials).

15 (f) REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION.—

16 (1) FIRST REPORT.—Not later than one year  
17 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-  
18 retary shall submit to Congress a report on the fol-  
19 lowing:

20 (A) An assessment of implementing sub-  
21 section (e), including—

22 (i) strategies to increase Veterans  
23 Justice Outreach specialists responsible for  
24 supporting justice-involved veterans in  
25 rural, remote, or underserved areas; and

1 (ii) the progress of the Secretary in  
2 addressing gaps in the workforce of the  
3 Veterans Justice Outreach Program identi-  
4 fied pursuant to paragraph (2) of such  
5 subsection.

6 (B) The performance goals and implemen-  
7 tation plans established under subsection  
8 (d)(1).

9 (2) SUBSEQUENT REPORT.—Not later than  
10 three years after the date on which the first report  
11 is submitted under paragraph (1), the Secretary  
12 shall submit to Congress a report on the progress of  
13 the Secretary in meeting the performance goals and  
14 carrying out activities under the implementation  
15 plans established under subsection (d)(1).

16 (g) REPORT ON VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS.—  
17 Not later than one year after the date of the enactment  
18 of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the Attor-  
19 ney General, shall submit to Congress a report on the en-  
20 gagement of the Department of Veterans Affairs with vet-  
21 erans treatment courts, including—

22 (1) the availability and efficacy of veterans  
23 treatment courts in meeting the needs of justice-in-  
24 volved veterans;

1           (2) best practices for Department of Veterans  
2           Affairs staff and justice-involved veterans in working  
3           with veterans treatment courts; and

4           (3) the ability of justice-involved veterans to ac-  
5           cess veterans treatment courts, including any bar-  
6           riers that exist to increasing such access.

7           (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

8           (1) The term “justice-involved veteran” means  
9           a veteran with active, ongoing, or recent contact  
10          with some component of a local criminal justice sys-  
11          tem.

12          (2) The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Pro-  
13          gram” means the program through which the De-  
14          partment of Veterans Affairs identifies justice-in-  
15          volved veterans and provides such veterans with ac-  
16          cess to Department services.

17          (3) The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-  
18          cialist” means an employee of the Department of  
19          Veterans Affairs who serves as a liaison between the  
20          Department and the local criminal justice system on  
21          behalf of a justice-involved veteran.

22          (4) The term “veterans treatment court” means  
23          a State or local court that is participating in the vet-  
24          erans treatment court program (as defined in section

- 1 2991(i)(1) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe
- 2 Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1)).

