

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5529

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make certain improvements to the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 8, 2021

Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS (for herself and Mr. BOST) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make certain improvements to the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, 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 Justice Out-
5 reach Improvement Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENTS TO VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH**
7 **PROGRAM.**

8 (a) **OUTREACH REQUIREMENT.**—The Secretary of
9 Veterans Affairs shall conduct outreach regarding the Vet-
10 erans Justice Outreach Program to justice-involved vet-

1 erans, military and veterans service organizations, and rel-
2 evant stakeholders in the criminal justice community, in-
3 cluding officials from local law enforcement, court, and jail
4 systems and others as determined appropriate by the Sec-
5 retary. Such outreach—

6 (1) shall be designed—

7 (A) to spread awareness and under-
8 standing of the Program;

9 (B) to spread awareness and under-
10 standing of veteran eligibility for the Program,
11 including the eligibility of veterans who were
12 discharged from service in the Armed Forces
13 under conditions other than honorable; and

14 (C) to improve the identification of justice-
15 involved veterans; and

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

19 (b) INCREASE IN NUMBER OF VJO SPECIALISTS.—

20 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase the num-
21 ber of Veterans Justice Outreach specialists responsible
22 for supporting justice-involved veterans in rural, remote,
23 or underserved areas, including areas with local criminal
24 justice systems located far from Department of Veterans
25 Affairs medical centers, as determined by the Secretary.

1 (c) PERFORMANCE GOALS, MEASURES, AND IMPLE-
2 MENTATION TIMELINES.—

3 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Vet-
4 erans Affairs shall establish performance goals,
5 measures, and implementation timelines for—

6 (A) the Veterans Justice Outreach Pro-
7 gram;

8 (B) Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists;
9 and

10 (C) providing support for research regard-
11 ing justice-involved veterans.

12 (2) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the
13 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
14 shall submit to Congress a report on the perform-
15 ance goals, measures, and implementation timelines
16 established under paragraph (1).

17 (d) TRAINING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall
18 ensure that all Veterans Justice Outreach Specialists re-
19 ceive training not less frequently than annually on—

20 (1) best practices for identifying and con-
21 ducting outreach to justice-involved veterans and rel-
22 evant stakeholders in the criminal justice commu-
23 nity; and

24 (2) veteran eligibility for the Veterans Justice
25 Outreach Program.

1 (e) REPORT ON VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS.—

2 Not later than one year after the date of the enactment
3 of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a re-
4 port on—

5 (1) the availability and efficacy of veterans
6 treatment courts;

7 (2) best practices for veterans treatment courts
8 in meeting the needs of both justice-involved vet-
9 erans and local criminal justice systems; and

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

13 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

14 (1) The term “justice-involved veteran” means
15 a veteran with active, ongoing, or recent contact
16 with some component of a local criminal justice sys-
17 tem.

18 (2) The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Pro-
19 gram” means the program through which the De-
20 partment of Veterans Affairs identifies justice-in-
21 volved veterans and provides such veterans with ac-
22 cess to Department services.

23 (3) The term “Veterans Justice Outreach Spe-
24 cialist” means an employee of the Department of
25 Veterans Affairs who serves as a liaison between the

1 Department and the local criminal justice system on
2 behalf of a justice-involved veteran.

3 (4) The term “veterans treatment court” means
4 a State or local court that is participating in the vet-
5 erans treatment court program (as defined in section
6 2991(i)(1) of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe
7 Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3797aa(i)(1))).

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