

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5516

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts with States or to award grants to States to promote health and wellness, prevent suicide, and improve outreach to veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 19, 2019

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

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts with States or to award grants to States to promote health and wellness, prevent suicide, and improve outreach to 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 “Commitment to Vet-
5 eran Support and Outreach Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AF-**
2 **FAIRS TO AWARD CONTRACTS AND GRANTS**
3 **TO STATES TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND**
4 **WELLNESS, PREVENT SUICIDE, AND IMPROVE**
5 **OUTREACH TO VETERANS.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 63 of title 38, United
7 States Code, is amended—

8 (1) by redesignating sections 6307 and 6308
9 and sections 6308 and 6309, respectively; and

10 (2) by inserting after section 6306 the following
11 new section 6307:

12 **“§ 6307. Contracts and grants to promote health and**
13 **wellness, prevent suicide, and improve**
14 **outreach to veterans**

15 “(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to
16 provide for assistance by the Secretary to States to carry
17 out programs that promote health and wellness, strength-
18 en the coordination, implementation, and evaluation of
19 comprehensive veteran suicide prevention programs, and
20 offer a high probability of improving outreach and assist-
21 ance to veterans and the spouses, children, and parents
22 of veterans, to ensure that such individuals are fully in-
23 formed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans
24 and veterans-related benefits and programs (including
25 State veterans programs) for which they may be eligible.

1 “(b) CONTRACTS.—(1) The Secretary may enter into
2 a contract with a State in order to carry out, coordinate,
3 improve, or otherwise enhance health and wellness pro-
4 grams, comprehensive veteran suicide prevention pro-
5 grams, and outreach by the Department and the State (in-
6 cluding outreach with respect to a State, county, or other
7 local veterans program).

8 “(2) As a condition of entering into a contract with
9 a State under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall require
10 the State to submit to the Secretary a detailed plan for
11 the use of any funds provided to the State pursuant to
12 the contract and to meet the outcome measures developed
13 by the Secretary under subsection (c)(4).

14 “(3) Each contract entered into with a State under
15 this subsection to carry out an activity shall include a re-
16 quirement that the State carry out the activity through—

17 “(A) the county veterans service officers of the
18 State; or

19 “(B) if a county veterans service officer does
20 not exist in the State or exists only in portions of
21 the State, an appropriate State, local, or tribal enti-
22 ty as determined by the Secretary.

23 “(c) GRANTS.—(1) The Secretary may award a grant
24 to a State to be used—

1 “(A) to carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
2 erwise enhance—

3 “(i) health and wellness programs;

4 “(ii) comprehensive veteran suicide preven-
5 tion programs;

6 “(iii) outreach activities; or

7 “(iv) activities to assist in the development
8 and submittal of claims for veterans and vet-
9 erans-related benefits; or

10 “(B) to increase the number of county veterans
11 service officers serving in the State by hiring new,
12 additional county veterans service officers.

13 “(2) A State that receives a grant under this sub-
14 section to carry out an activity described in paragraph
15 (1)(A) shall carry out the activity through—

16 “(A) a county veterans service officer of the
17 State; or

18 “(B) if a county veterans service officer does
19 not exist in the State or exists only in portions of
20 the State, an appropriate State, local, or tribal enti-
21 ty as determined by the Secretary.

22 “(3)(A) To be eligible for a grant under this sub-
23 section, a State shall submit to the Secretary an applica-
24 tion therefor at such time, in such manner, and containing
25 such information as the Secretary may require.

1 “(B) Each application submitted under subparagraph
2 (A) shall include the following:

3 “(i) A detailed plan for the use of the grant.

4 “(ii) A description of the programs through
5 which the State will meet the outcome measures de-
6 veloped by the Secretary under paragraph (4).

7 “(4)(A) The Secretary shall develop and provide to
8 the recipient of a grant under this subsection written guid-
9 ance on outcome measures, policies of the Department,
10 and procedures for applying for grants under this section.

11 “(B) The Secretary shall review the performance of
12 each State that receives a grant under this section and
13 shall make information regarding such performance pub-
14 licly available.

15 “(C) In the case of a State that is a recipient of a
16 grant under this subsection that does not meet the out-
17 come measures developed by the Secretary, the Secretary
18 shall require the State to submit a remediation plan under
19 which the State shall describe how and when it plans to
20 meet such outcome measures. The Secretary must approve
21 such plan before the Secretary may award a subsequent
22 grant to that State under this subsection.

23 “(5) A grant under this subsection—

24 “(A) shall be used—

1 “(i) to expand existing programs, activi-
2 ties, and services;

3 “(ii) to hire new, additional county vet-
4 erans service officers; or

5 “(iii) for travel and transportation to fa-
6 cilitate carrying out clause (i) or (ii); and

7 “(B) shall be used to supplement and not sup-
8 plant State and local funding that is otherwise avail-
9 able.

10 “(6) A grant under this subsection may be used to
11 provide education and training, including on-the-job train-
12 ing, for State, county, local, and tribal government em-
13 ployees who provide (or when trained will provide) vet-
14 erans outreach services in order for those employees to
15 obtain accreditation in accordance with procedures ap-
16 proved by the Secretary and, for employees so accredited,
17 for purposes of continuing education.

18 “(7) A grant awarded under paragraph (1)(A) may
19 be used to carry out, coordinate, improve, or otherwise en-
20 hance an activity carried out pursuant to a contract en-
21 tered into under subsection (b).

22 “(d) COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER DE-
23 FINED.—In this section, the term ‘county veterans service
24 officer’ includes—

1 “(1) a local equivalent veterans service officer;
2 and

3 “(2) a tribal veterans service officer or tribal
4 veteran representative.

5 “(e) FUNDING.—(1) Amounts for the activities of the
6 Department under this section shall be budgeted and ap-
7 propriated through a separate appropriation account.

8 “(2) In the budget justification materials submitted
9 to Congress in support of the Department budget for any
10 fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President
11 under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary shall in-
12 clude a separate statement of the amount requested to be
13 appropriated for that fiscal year for the account specified
14 in paragraph (1).

15 “(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
16 is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary for each
17 of fiscal years 2020 through 2024, \$50,000,000 to carry
18 out this section.”.

19 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
20 at the beginning of chapter 63 of such title is amended
21 by striking the items relating to sections 6307 and 6308
22 and inserting the following new items:

 “6307. Contracts and grants to promote health and wellness, prevent suicide,
 and improve outreach to veterans.

 “6308. Outreach for eligible dependents.

 “6309. Biennial report to Congress.”.

