

LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

MAY 15, 2008.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of
the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. FILNER, from the Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 3889]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 3889) to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a longitudinal study of the vocational rehabilitation programs administered by the Secretary, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

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AMENDMENT

The amendment is as follows:
Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS.

(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—Chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 3122. Longitudinal study of vocational rehabilitation programs

“(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—(1) Subject to the availability of appropriated funds, the Secretary shall conduct a longitudinal study of a statistically valid sample of each of the groups of individuals described in paragraph (2). The Secretary shall study each such group over a period of at least 20 years.

“(2) The groups of individuals described in this paragraph are the following:

“(A) Individuals who begin participating in a vocational rehabilitation program under this chapter during fiscal year 2009.

“(B) Individuals who begin participating in such a program during fiscal year 2011.

“(C) Individuals who begin participating in such a program during fiscal year 2014.

“(b) ANNUAL REPORTS.—By not later than July 1 of each year covered by the study required under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the study during the preceding year.

“(c) CONTENTS OF REPORT.—The Secretary shall include in the report required under subsection (b) any data the Secretary determines is necessary to determine the long-term outcomes of the individuals participating in the vocational rehabilitation programs under this chapter. The Secretary may add data elements from time to time as necessary. In addition, each such report shall contain the following information:

“(1) The number of individuals participating in vocational rehabilitation programs under this chapter who suspended participation in such a program during the year covered by the report.

“(2) The average number of months such individuals served on active duty.

“(3) The distribution of disability rating of such individuals.

“(4) The types of other benefits administered by the Secretary received by such individuals.

“(5) The types of social security benefits received by such individuals.

“(6) Any unemployment benefits received by such individuals.

“(7) The average number of months such individuals were employed during the year covered by the report.

“(8) The average annual starting and ending salaries such individuals who were employed during the year covered by the report.

“(9) The number of such individuals enrolled in an institution of higher learning, as that term is defined in section 3452(f) of this title.

“(10) The average number of academic credit hours, degrees, and certificates obtained by such individuals during the year covered by the report.

“(11) The average number of visits such individuals made to Department medical facilities during the year covered by the report.

“(12) The average number of visits such individuals made to non-Department medical facilities during the year covered by the report.

“(13) The average annual income of such individuals.

“(14) The average total household income of such individuals for the year covered by the report.

“(15) The percentage of such individuals who own their principal residences.

“(16) The average number of dependents of each such veteran.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“3122 Longitudinal study of vocational rehabilitation programs.”

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

H.R. 3889 was introduced on October 18, 2007, by Representative John Boozman of Arkansas, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. The legislation would authorize the Secretary of the De-

partment Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a database of outcomes experienced by those who participate in the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Currently, there is relatively little data on how the VR&E program improves the lives of our more seriously injured veterans. Conducting a 20-year longitudinal study that requires annual reports to Congress will assist the VA in making management decisions and help guide Congressional legislative deliberations.

VR&E PROGRAM

The VR&E program has two primary objectives. First, VR&E seeks to put eligible disabled veterans back to work through one of five tracks. The VR&E program uses a five track model that consists of (1) reemployment with a former employer; (2) rapid employment services for new employment; (3) self-employment; (4) employment through long-term services; and, (5) independent living services. Historically, 85 to 90 percent of participants enter long-term services to pursue an academic degree to achieve certification in a skill and the remaining elect on-the-job training, apprenticeship programs, or other non-degree training.

The second objective is to provide independent living skills to veterans whose disabilities will likely prevent them from re-entering the workforce. Those veterans may later be able to participate in employment tracks if their disability permits.

To qualify for the VR&E program, a veteran must have a service-connected disability rated at 20 percent or more and have a barrier to employment. A veteran with a 10 percent service-connected disability may qualify if the veteran has a serious barrier to employment. The existence and severity of employment barriers are determined by VR&E staff through interviews and testing.

In addition to paying for all expenses such as tuition, the program also provides funds for various types of ancillary items such as computers and other equipment needed to complete the rehabilitation program, as well as providing a living stipend based on the type of program and the number of dependents. Currently, the maximum stipend is \$761.18 for a veteran with two dependents plus \$55.49 for each additional dependent.

THE NEED FOR QUANTITATIVE INFORMATION

To understand the value added by the VR&E program, VA must be able to compare the economic achievements of those who participate in the program with veterans and disabled veterans who do not.

VA currently collects data that does not accurately demonstrate the long-term results of participation in, or completion of, the VR&E program. Typically, VA knows how long a veteran spends in the various phases in long-term training (usually a degree program) and the costs related to that participation. However, VA does not collect data on earnings, promotions, and other long-term employment-related data following completion. VA also does not collect data on those who may qualify for the program but do not complete the track appropriate to their situation. The Committee be-

lieves that collecting these types of data is vital to understanding the program's strengths and weaknesses and that a longitudinal study of several cohorts of participants is the appropriate way to understand the program's effectiveness.

HEARINGS

On April 16, 2008, the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a legislative hearing on a number of bills, including H.R. 3889. The following witnesses testified: The Honorable Bob Filner of California; The Honorable Steve Buyer of Indiana; The Honorable Ciro D. Rodriguez of Texas; The Honorable Cliff Stearns of Florida; The Honorable John A. Yarmuth of Kentucky; The Honorable Robin Hayes of North Carolina; The Honorable Artur Davis of Alabama; The Honorable Patrick J. Murphy of Pennsylvania; Mr. Ronald F. Chamrin, Assistant Director, Economic Commission, The American Legion; Mr. Justin Brown, Legislative Associate, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Mr. Richard Daley, Associate Legislative Director, Paralyzed Veterans of America; Mr. Patrick M. Campbell, Legislative Director, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America; Col. Robert F. Norton, USA (Ret.), Deputy Director, Government Relations, Military Officers Association of America; The Honorable Charles S. Ciccolella, Assistant Secretary, Veterans' Employment and Training Service, U.S. Department of Labor; Mr. Thomas L. Bush, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense; Mr. Curtis L. Gilroy, Director for Accession Policy, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, U.S. Department of Defense; and Mr. Keith Pedigo, Associate Deputy Under Secretary, Policy and Program Management, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, accompanied by Mr. John Brizzi, Staff Attorney, Office of General Counsel, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Those submitting statements for the record included: Mr. Jot D. Carpenter Jr., Vice President, Government Affairs, CTIA—The Wireless Association; Mr. Kerry Baker, Associate National Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans; and Mr. Kyle McSlarrow, President and Chief Executive Officer, National Cable and Telecommunications Association.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

On April 23, 2008, the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity met in open markup session and ordered favorably forwarded to the full Committee H.R. 3889, as amended, by voice vote. During consideration of the bill the following amendment was considered:

An amendment in the nature of a substitute by Mr. Boozman of Arkansas, was agreed to by voice vote.

On April 30, 2008, the full Committee met in open markup session, a quorum being present, and ordered H.R. 3889, as amended, favorably reported to the House of Representatives, by voice vote. During consideration of the bill the following amendment was considered:

An amendment by Mr. Boozman of Arkansas to clarify that funding for the longitudinal study is subject to the availability of appropriated funds, was agreed to by voice vote.

COMMITTEE VOTES

Clause 3(b) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires the Committee to list the record votes on the motion to report the legislation and amendments thereto. There were no record votes taken on amendments or in connection with ordering H.R. 3889 reported to the House. A motion by Mr. Buyer of Indiana to order H.R. 3889, as amended, reported favorably to the House of Representatives was agreed to by voice vote.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS

In compliance with clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII and clause (2)(b)(1) of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee's oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the descriptive portions of this report.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL PERFORMANCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In accordance with clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee's performance goals and objectives are reflected in the descriptive portions of this report.

NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY, ENTITLEMENT AUTHORITY, AND TAX EXPENDITURES

In compliance with clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee adopts as its own the estimate of new budget authority, entitlement authority, or tax expenditures or revenues contained in the cost estimate prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

EARMARKS AND TAX AND TARIFF BENEFITS

H.R. 3889 does not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9(d), 9(e), or 9(f) of rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE

The Committee adopts as its own the cost estimate on H.R. 3889 prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

Pursuant to clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following is the cost estimate for H.R. 3889 provided by the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, May 12, 2008.

Hon. BOB FILNER,
*Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 3889, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a longitudinal study of the vocational rehabilitation programs administered by the Secretary.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Camille Woodland.

Sincerely,

ROBERT A. SUNSHINE
(For Peter R. Orszag, Director).

Enclosure.

H.R. 3889—A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a longitudinal study of the vocational rehabilitation programs administered by the Secretary

H.R. 3889 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to conduct a longitudinal study of vocational rehabilitation programs that would track veterans' participation and educational and employment outcomes for at least 20 years. VA also would be required to submit an annual report on the study. Based on information from VA, CBO estimates that designing the study and the survey instruments and implementing the study would cost about \$350,000 in 2009 and \$1 million over the 2009–2013 period, assuming appropriation of the estimated amounts. Enacting the bill would have no effect on direct spending or revenues.

H.R. 3889 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no cost on state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Camille Woodland. This estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

FEDERAL MANDATES STATEMENT

The Committee adopts as its own the estimate of Federal mandates regarding H.R. 3889 prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 423 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE STATEMENT

No advisory committees within the meaning of section 5(b) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act would be created by H.R. 3889.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 3(d)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee finds that the Constitutional au-

thority for H.R. 3889 is provided by Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States.

APPLICABILITY TO LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Committee finds that the legislation does not relate to the terms and conditions of employment or access to public services or accommodations within the meaning of section 102(b)(3) of the Congressional Accountability Act.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS OF THE LEGISLATION

Section 1. Longitudinal study of vocational rehabilitation programs

This section would amend chapter 31, title 38, United States Code by adding a new section 3122.

New section 3122 would require the Secretary of the VA to conduct a longitudinal study of a statistically valid sample of each of the groups (defined as those who begin participation in the vocational rehabilitation program during fiscal years 2009, 2011, and 2014) of individuals participating in vocational rehabilitation programs. The Secretary would be required to study these groups for at least 20 years.

Subsection (b) requires the Secretary to submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report, no later than July 1 of each year, on the study of the preceding year.

Subsection (c) defines the contents of the report and will authorize the Secretary to include any data the Secretary deems necessary to determine the long-term outcomes of the individuals participating. The data required includes, but is not limited to:

- The number of individuals participating in the program who have suspended their participation.
- The average number of months that such individuals served on active duty.
- The distribution of disability rating of such individuals.
- The types of benefits such individuals are receiving from the VA.
- The types of Social Security benefits such individuals are receiving.
- Any unemployment benefits received by such individuals.
- The average number of months that such individuals were employed during the year covered by the report.
- The average annual starting and ending salaries of such individuals who were employed during the year covered by the report.
- The number of such individuals enrolled in an institute of higher learning.
- The average number of academic credits, degrees, and certificates obtained by such individuals during the year covered by the report.
- The average number of visits such individuals made to the VA medical facilities during the year covered by the report.
- The average number of visits such individuals made to non-VA medical facilities during the year covered by the report.
- The average annual income of such individuals.
- The average household income of such individuals for the year covered by such report.

- The percentage of such individuals who own their principal residences.
- The average number of dependents of each such veteran.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW MADE BY THE BILL, AS REPORTED

In compliance with clause 3(e) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (new matter is printed in italic and existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE

* * * * *

PART III—READJUSTMENT AND RELATED BENEFITS

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CHAPTER 31—TRAINING AND REHABILITATION FOR VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES

Sec.

3100. Purposes.

* * * * *

3122. *Longitudinal study of vocational rehabilitation programs.*

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§3122. *Longitudinal study of vocational rehabilitation programs*

(a) *STUDY REQUIRED.*—(1) *Subject to the availability of appropriated funds, the Secretary shall conduct a longitudinal study of a statistically valid sample of each of the groups of individuals described in paragraph (2). The Secretary shall study each such group over a period of at least 20 years.*

(2) *The groups of individuals described in this paragraph are the following:*

(A) *Individuals who begin participating in a vocational rehabilitation program under this chapter during fiscal year 2009.*

(B) *Individuals who begin participating in such a program during fiscal year 2011.*

(C) *Individuals who begin participating in such a program during fiscal year 2014.*

(b) *ANNUAL REPORTS.*—*By not later than July 1 of each year covered by the study required under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the study during the preceding year.*

(c) *CONTENTS OF REPORT.*—*The Secretary shall include in the report required under subsection (b) any data the Secretary determines is necessary to determine the long-term outcomes of the individuals participating in the vocational rehabilitation programs under this chapter. The Secretary may add data elements from time to time as necessary. In addition, each such report shall contain the following information:*

(1) *The number of individuals participating in vocational rehabilitation programs under this chapter who suspended participation in such a program during the year covered by the report.*

(2) *The average number of months such individuals served on active duty.*

(3) *The distribution of disability rating of such individuals.*

(4) *The types of other benefits administered by the Secretary received by such individuals.*

(5) *The types of social security benefits received by such individuals.*

(6) *Any unemployment benefits received by such individuals.*

(7) *The average number of months such individuals were employed during the year covered by the report.*

(8) *The average annual starting and ending salaries such individuals who were employed during the year covered by the report.*

(9) *The number of such individuals enrolled in an institution of higher learning, as that term is defined in section 3452(f) of this title.*

(10) *The average number of academic credit hours, degrees, and certificates obtained by such individuals during the year covered by the report.*

(11) *The average number of visits such individuals made to Department medical facilities during the year covered by the report.*

(12) *The average number of visits such individuals made to non-Department medical facilities during the year covered by the report.*

(13) *The average annual income of such individuals.*

(14) *The average total household income of such individuals for the year covered by the report.*

(15) *The percentage of such individuals who own their principal residences.*

(16) *The average number of dependents of each such veteran.*

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