

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3312

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants for establishing coordinated networks of services and resources for veterans and their families.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 29, 2015

Ms. ADAMS (for herself, Mr. PITTENGER, Mr. KATKO, and Ms. MENG) 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 make grants for establishing coordinated networks of services and resources for veterans and their families.

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 Benefits Net-
5 work Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS GRANTS FOR**
2 **ESTABLISHING COORDINATED NETWORKS OF**
3 **SERVICES AND RESOURCES FOR VETERANS**
4 **AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 5 of title
6 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end
7 the following new section:

8 **“§ 533. Grants for establishing coordinated networks**
9 **of services and resources for veterans**
10 **and their families**

11 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may make a grant
12 to an eligible entity for the purpose of establishing or ex-
13 panding a regional technology system to provide an active
14 database and enrollment system that can be used by a co-
15 ordinated network of private, public, and non-profit enti-
16 ties to assist veterans and their family members in apply-
17 ing for benefits and services offered by such entities that
18 participate in the network.

19 “(b) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—To be eligible to receive
20 a grant under this section, an entity shall—

21 “(1) be a State or local government, a regional
22 council of governments, or a private entity; and

23 “(2) submit to the Secretary an application
24 containing—

25 “(A) a description of the credentialing sys-
26 tem the entity intends to use to determine

1 which service providers will be eligible for inclu-
2 sion in the network established using the grant
3 that ensures such providers meet the require-
4 ments under subsection (c)(3); and

5 “(B) such other information and assur-
6 ances as the Secretary may require.

7 “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—

8 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The recipient of a grant
9 under this section shall use the grant to establish a
10 coordinated network of private, public, and nonprofit
11 services and resources, as described in paragraph
12 (2), for veterans and their families designed to—

13 “(A) facilitate awareness and under-
14 standing of benefits that are available to mem-
15 bers of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their
16 family members who are eligible for benefits;

17 “(B) use best practices to maximize out-
18 reach to veterans and family members who are
19 eligible for benefits; and

20 “(C) have the capacity to be replicated at
21 other locations or regional networks.

22 “(2) SERVICES AND RESOURCES.—The services
23 and resources included in the networks established
24 using grants under this section may include—

25 “(A) education;

- 1 “(B) employment;
- 2 “(C) family support and recreation;
- 3 “(D) health care;
- 4 “(E) mental health and behavioral coun-
- 5 seling;
- 6 “(F) substance abuse counseling;
- 7 “(G) housing;
- 8 “(H) financial assistance;
- 9 “(I) legal assistance;
- 10 “(J) public benefit support;
- 11 “(K) benefits under the laws administered
- 12 by the Secretary; and
- 13 “(L) such other services and resources as
- 14 the Secretary determines appropriate.
- 15 “(3) CRITERIA FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS.—In
- 16 order to be eligible for inclusion in a network estab-
- 17 lished using a grant under this section, a service
- 18 provider shall—
- 19 “(A) demonstrate the capacity, experience,
- 20 and expertise required to participate in the net-
- 21 work; and
- 22 “(B) enter into an agreement with the en-
- 23 tity that receives the grant that ensures that
- 24 the provider will not—

1 “(i) input the personal information of
2 a veteran or veteran’s family member into
3 the coordinated network without receiving
4 the informed consent and authorization of
5 the veteran or family member; or

6 “(ii) use such personal information in
7 any manner or for any purpose other than
8 the performance of the services in compli-
9 ance with the coordinated network.

10 “(d) PRIORITY IN AWARDING GRANTS.—In awarding
11 grants under this section, the Secretary shall give priority
12 to an eligible entity that provides services to individuals
13 residing in a geographic area where a large number of vet-
14 erans and members of the Armed Forces reside, as deter-
15 mined by the Secretary.

16 “(e) DEADLINE FOR USE OF FUNDS.—The Secretary
17 shall provide, as a condition of awarding a grant under
18 this section to an eligible entity, that the eligible entity
19 must use the grant before the expiration of the two-year
20 period that begins on the date on which the eligible entity
21 receives the grant. If a grant recipient has not used the
22 grant before the expiration of such period, the Secretary
23 may recover from the eligible entity the unused amount
24 of the grant funds.

1 “(f) COST-SHARING.—As a condition on the provision
2 of funds under this section to an eligible entity, the eligible
3 entity must agree to contribute an amount, derived from
4 non-Federal sources, equal to at least 50 percent of the
5 funds provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the
6 eligible entity under this section.

7 “(g) AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.—The Secretary shall
8 use amounts otherwise made available for the Veterans
9 Benefits Administration to make grants under this sec-
10 tion.

11 “(h) OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall use the au-
12 thority of the Secretary to advertise in the national media
13 under section 532 of this title to inform veterans, members
14 of the Armed Forces, and their families about the net-
15 works established using grants under this section.

16 “(i) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary shall
17 submit to Congress an annual report on the administra-
18 tion of the grant program under this section. Each such
19 report shall include a description of how grant recipients
20 used funds awarded under this section.”.

21 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
22 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting
23 after the item relating to section 532 the following new
24 item:

“533. Grants for establishing coordinated networks of services and resources for veterans and their families.”.

