

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2207

To allow qualified volunteer first responders to qualify for public service
loan forgiveness.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 7, 2017

Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mrs. McCASKILL, and Ms. HEITKAMP) introduced
the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee
on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To allow qualified volunteer first responders to qualify for
public service loan forgiveness.

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 “Volunteer First Re-
5 sponder Loan Forgiveness Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. LOAN FORGIVENESS FOR VOLUNTEER FIRST RE-**
7 **SPONDERS.**

8 Section 455(m)(3) of the Higher Education Act of
9 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)(3)) is amended—

10 (1) in subparagraph (B)—

1 (A) in clause (i), by striking “or” after the
 2 semicolon;

3 (B) in clause (ii), by striking the period at
 4 the end and inserting “; or”; and

5 (C) by adding at the end the following:

6 “(iii) volunteer work as a qualified
 7 volunteer first responder in accordance
 8 with subparagraph (C).”; and

9 (2) by adding at the end the following:

10 “(C) QUALIFIED VOLUNTEER FIRST RE-
 11 SPONDER.—

12 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘quali-
 13 fied volunteer first responder’ means an in-
 14 dividual who—

15 “(I) does volunteer work for a
 16 public safety organization (which may
 17 include firefighters, law enforcement
 18 officers, emergency medical personnel,
 19 or other first responders to emer-
 20 gencies); and

21 “(II) is certified as a firefighter,
 22 law enforcement officer, emergency
 23 medical services provider, or other re-
 24 sponder in the State, unit of general
 25 local government, or Indian tribe in

1 which the individual serves as a volun-
2 teer.

3 “(ii) PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZA-
4 TION.—The term ‘public safety organiza-
5 tion’ means any State, local, or tribal gov-
6 ernmental agency or nonprofit organization
7 that has the principal purpose of pro-
8 tecting the safety of life, health, or prop-
9 erty.

10 “(iii) FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT.—The
11 Secretary shall—

12 “(I) determine the minimum vol-
13 unteer time required for a qualified
14 volunteer first responder to be treated
15 as an individual employed in a full-
16 time job for purposes of this sub-
17 section; and

18 “(II) ensure that such minimum
19 volunteer time—

20 “(aa) is not less than the
21 amount of volunteer time that is
22 required for the qualified volun-
23 teer first responder to be consid-
24 ered an active member of the rel-

1 evant public safety organization;
2 and
3 “(bb) does not exceed the
4 equivalent of 200 hours per
5 year.”.

6 **SEC. 3. REGULATIONS.**

7 The Secretary of Education shall promulgate, after
8 consultation with public safety organizations (which shall
9 include firefighter, law enforcement officer, and emergency
10 responder organizations), regulations to carry out the
11 amendments made by section 2, including regulations re-
12 lating to—

13 (1) the minimum volunteer time required for a
14 qualified volunteer first responder to be treated as
15 an individual employed in a full-time job for pur-
16 poses of section 455(m) of the Higher Education
17 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)); and

18 (2) the process of tracking and verifying that
19 volunteer time.

20 **SEC. 4. ENGAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS.**

21 The Secretary of Education shall develop a plan re-
22 garding how the Department of Education will—

23 (1) disseminate information and raise aware-
24 ness about eligibility for qualified volunteer first re-
25 sponders for public service loan forgiveness under

1 section 455(m) of the Higher Education Act of 1965
2 (20 U.S.C. 1087e(m)) (as amended by this Act); and
3 (2) engage qualified volunteer first responders
4 and public safety organizations in the process of
5 tracking and verifying volunteer hours for purposes
6 of public service loan forgiveness under such section.

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