

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2736

To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to provide for a national toll-free hotline to provide information and assistance to veterans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 5, 1999

Mrs. CAPPS (for herself, Mr. EVANS, and Mr. KUYKENDALL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award grants to provide for a national toll-free hotline to provide information and assistance to veterans.

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’ Emergency
5 Telephone Service Act of 1999”.

6 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL VETERANS ASSISTANCE HOTLINE**
7 **GRANT.**

8 (a) **AUTHORITY TO AWARD GRANTS.**—The Secretary
9 of Veterans Affairs may award a grant to a private, non-

1 profit entity to provide for the operation of a national, toll-
2 free telephone hotline to provide information and assist-
3 ance to veterans and their families, including crisis inter-
4 vention counseling, general information with respect to
5 veterans benefits under title 38, United States Code, refer-
6 rals to appropriate individuals with expertise in such vet-
7 erans benefits, and information with respect to the provi-
8 sion of emergency shelter and food, substance abuse reha-
9 bilitation, employment training and opportunities, and
10 small business assistance programs.

11 (b) DURATION.—A grant under this section may ex-
12 tend over a period of not more than two years.

13 (c) ANNUAL APPROVAL.—The provision of payments
14 under a grant under this section shall be subject to annual
15 approval by the Secretary and subject to the availability
16 of appropriations for each fiscal year to make the pay-
17 ments.

18 (d) ACTIVITIES.—Funds received by an entity under
19 this section shall be used to establish and operate a na-
20 tional, toll-free telephone hotline to provide information
21 and assistance to veterans. In establishing and operating
22 the hotline, a private, nonprofit entity shall—

23 (1) contract with a carrier for the use of a toll-
24 free telephone line;

1 (2) employ, train, and supervise personnel to
2 answer incoming calls and provide counseling and
3 referral services to callers on a 24-hour-a-day basis;

4 (3) assemble and maintain a current database
5 of information relating to services for veterans to
6 which callers may be referred throughout the United
7 States; and

8 (4) publicize the hotline to potential users
9 throughout the United States.

10 (e) APPLICATION.—A grant may not be made under
11 this section unless an application for such grant has been
12 approved by the Secretary. To be approved by the Sec-
13 retary under this subsection an application shall—

14 (1) contain such agreements, assurances, and
15 information, be in such form and be submitted in
16 such manner as the Secretary shall prescribe
17 through notice in the Federal Register;

18 (2) include a complete description of the appli-
19 cant’s plan for the operation of a national veterans
20 assistance hotline grant, including descriptions of—

21 (A) the training program for hotline per-
22 sonnel;

23 (B) the hiring criteria for hotline per-
24 sonnel;

1 (C) the methods for the creation, maintenance and updating of a resource database;

2 (D) a plan for publicizing the availability of the hotline;

3 (E) a plan for providing service to non-English speaking callers, including hotline personnel who speak Spanish; and

4 (F) a plan for facilitating access to the hotline by persons with hearing impairments;

5 (3) demonstrate that the applicant has nationally recognized expertise in the area of furnishing assistance to veterans and a record of high quality service in furnishing such assistance, including a demonstration of support from advocacy groups, such as Veterans Service Organizations; and

6 (4) contain such other information as the Secretary may require.

7 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2000 and 2001.

9 (2) AVAILABILITY.—Funds authorized to be appropriated under paragraph (1) shall remain available until expended.

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