

107TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 612

To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement an annual plan for outreach regarding veterans benefits, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 26, 2001

Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself and Mr. BOND) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement an annual plan for outreach regarding veterans benefits, 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 “National I Owe You
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ANNUAL**
2 **PLAN FOR OUTREACH REGARDING VET-**
3 **ERANS BENEFITS.**

4 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
5 ings:

6 (1) The mission of the Department of Veterans
7 Affairs includes acting as a principal advocate for
8 veterans in order to assure that veterans receive the
9 benefits to which they are entitled as a result of
10 service to the nation.

11 (2) The Veterans Benefits Administration of
12 the Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible
13 for the timely and accurate distribution of benefits
14 to veterans and their dependents.

15 (3) Only 2,600,000 of the 24,000,000 living
16 United States veterans are receiving benefits
17 through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

18 (4) There may be veterans entitled to veterans
19 benefits who are not aware of their entitlement to
20 such benefits.

21 (5) The Veterans Benefits Administration needs
22 to take more aggressive actions to ensure that all
23 veterans are aware of the veterans benefits to which
24 they are entitled.

25 (6) The State of Wisconsin Department of Vet-
26 erans Affairs recently initiated a program that per-

1 mits veterans to apply at one location for benefits
 2 such as health care, disability compensation, edu-
 3 cation, and job training.

4 (b) ANNUAL PLAN.—Subchapter II of chapter 5 of
 5 title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the
 6 end the following new section:

7 **“§ 531. Annual plan for outreach regarding veterans**
 8 **benefits**

9 “(a) DEVELOPMENT.—The Secretary shall, on an an-
 10 nual basis, develop a plan for the outreach activities of
 11 the Department regarding veterans benefits during the
 12 year covered by such plan.

13 “(b) PLAN ELEMENTS.—(1) Each plan under this
 14 section shall include the following elements:

15 “(A) A program to encourage veterans to apply
 16 for veterans benefits.

17 “(B) A program to identify veterans entitled to
 18 veterans benefits who are not currently receiving
 19 such benefits.

20 “(C) A program to notify veterans of any modi-
 21 fications to veterans benefits programs.

22 “(D) Such other programs or elements as the
 23 Secretary considers appropriate.

24 “(2) A plan under this section for a year may consist
 25 of an update of the plan under this section for the previous

1 year, taking into account changes in circumstances over
2 time.

3 “(c) CONSULTATION.—In developing a plan under
4 subsection (a), the Secretary shall consult with directors
5 of the veterans agencies of the States, appropriate rep-
6 resentatives of veterans service organizations and other
7 veterans advocacy groups, and such other persons as the
8 Secretary considers appropriate.

9 “(d) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall imple-
10 ment each plan developed under this section.

11 “(e) VETERANS BENEFITS DEFINED.—In this sec-
12 tion the term ‘veterans benefits’ means benefits for vet-
13 erans under the laws administered by the Secretary.”.

14 (c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
15 at the beginning of chapter 5 of that title is amended by
16 inserting after the item relating to section 530 the fol-
17 lowing new item:

“531. Annual plan for outreach regarding veterans benefits.”.

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