

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1199

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 5, 2003

Mr. FEINGOLD(for himself, Mrs. LINCOLN, and Mr. MCCAIN) 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 improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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 “Veterans Outreach Im-
5 provement Act of 2003”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF OUTREACH.**

7 Section 101 of title 38, United States Code, is
8 amended by adding at the end the following new para-
9 graph:

1 “(34) The term ‘outreach’ means the act or process
 2 of reaching out in a systematic manner to proactively pro-
 3 vide information, services, and benefits counseling to vet-
 4 erans, and to the spouses, children, and parents of vet-
 5 erans who may be eligible to receive benefits under the
 6 laws administered by the Secretary, to ensure that such
 7 individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in apply-
 8 ing for, any benefits and programs under such laws.”.

9 **SEC. 3. AUTHORITIES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ENHANCE-**
 10 **MENT OF OUTREACH OF ACTIVITIES DEPART-**
 11 **MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 5 of title 38, United
 13 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
 14 lowing new subchapter:

15 “SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH
 16 **“§ 561. Outreach activities: funding**

17 “(a) The Secretary shall establish a separate account
 18 for the funding of the outreach activities of the Depart-
 19 ment, and shall establish within such account a separate
 20 subaccount for the funding of the outreach activities of
 21 each element of the Department specified in subsection
 22 (c).

23 “(b) In the budget justification materials submitted
 24 to Congress in support of the Department budget for any
 25 fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President

1 under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary shall in-
 2 clude a separate statement of the amount requested for
 3 such fiscal year for activities as follows:

4 “(1) For outreach activities of the Department
 5 in aggregate.

6 “(2) For outreach activities of each element of
 7 the Department specified in subsection (c).

8 “(c) The elements of the Department specified in this
 9 subsection are as follows:

10 “(1) The Veterans Health Administration.

11 “(2) The Veterans Benefits Administration.

12 “(3) The National Cemetery Administration.

13 **“§ 562. Outreach activities: coordination of activities**
 14 **within Department**

15 “(a) The Secretary shall establish and maintain pro-
 16 cedures for ensuring the effective coordination of the out-
 17 reach activities of the Department between and among the
 18 following:

19 “(1) The Office of the Secretary.

20 “(2) The Office of Public Affairs.

21 “(3) The Veterans Health Administration.

22 “(4) The Veterans Benefits Administration.

23 “(5) The National Cemetery Administration.

24 “(b) The Secretary shall—

1 “(1) periodically review the procedures main-
 2 tained under subsection (a) for the purpose of ensur-
 3 ing that such procedures meet the requirement in
 4 that subsection; and

5 “(2) make such modifications to such proce-
 6 dures as the Secretary considers appropriate in light
 7 of such review in order to better achieve that pur-
 8 pose.

9 **“§ 563. Outreach activities: cooperative activities**
 10 **with States; grants to States for improve-**
 11 **ment of outreach**

12 “(a) It is the purpose of this section to assist States
 13 in carrying out programs that offer a high probability of
 14 improving outreach and assistance to veterans, and to the
 15 spouses, children, and parents of veterans who may be eli-
 16 gible to receive veterans’ or veterans’-related benefits, to
 17 ensure that such individuals are fully informed about, and
 18 assisted in applying for, any veterans’ and veterans’-re-
 19 lated benefits and programs (including under State vet-
 20 erans’ programs).

21 “(b) The Secretary shall ensure that outreach and as-
 22 sistance is provided under programs referred to in sub-
 23 section (a) in locations proximate to populations of vet-
 24 erans and other individuals referred to in that subsection,

1 as determined utilizing criteria for determining the prox-
2 imity of such populations to veterans health care services.

3 “(c) The Secretary may enter into cooperative agree-
4 ments and arrangements with veterans agencies of the
5 States in order to carry out, coordinate, improve, or other-
6 wise enhance outreach by the Department and the States
7 (including outreach with respect to State veterans’ pro-
8 grams).

9 “(d)(1) The Secretary may award grants to veterans
10 agencies of States in order to achieve purposes as follows:

11 “(A) To carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
12 erwise enhance outreach, including activities pursu-
13 ant to cooperative agreements and arrangements
14 under subsection (c).

15 “(B) To carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
16 erwise enhance activities to assist in the development
17 and submittal of claims for veterans’ and veterans’-
18 related benefits, including activities pursuant to co-
19 operative agreements and arrangements under sub-
20 section (c).

21 “(2) A veterans agency of a State receiving a grant
22 under this subsection may use the grant amount for pur-
23 poses described in paragraph (1) or award all or any por-
24 tion of such grant amount to local governments in such

1 State, other public entities in such State, or private non-
 2 profit organizations in such State for such purposes.

3 “(e) Amounts available for the Department for out-
 4 reach in the account under section 561 of this title shall
 5 be available for activities under this section, including
 6 grants under subsection (d).”.

7 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
 8 at the beginning of chapter 5 of such title is amended by
 9 adding at the end the following new items

“SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH

“561. Outreach activities: funding.

“562. Outreach activities: coordination of activities within Department.

“563. Outreach activities: cooperative activities with States; grants to States for
 improvement of outreach.”.

