

108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2524

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the provision of health care, rehabilitation, and related services to veterans suffering from trauma relating to a blast injury, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 16, 2004

Mr. GRAHAM of Florida 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 provision of health care, rehabilitation, and related services to veterans suffering from trauma relating to a blast injury, 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. CENTERS FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND**
4 **CLINICAL ACTIVITIES ON BLAST INJURIES OF**
5 **VETERANS.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—(1) Subchapter II of chapter 73
7 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at
8 the end the following new section:

1 **“§ 7327. Centers for research, education, and clinical**
2 **activities on blast injuries**

3 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to
4 provide for the improvement of the provision of health care
5 services and related rehabilitation and education services
6 to eligible veterans suffering from multiple traumas asso-
7 ciated with a blast injury through—

8 “(1) the conduct of research to support the pro-
9 vision of such services in accordance with the most
10 current evidence on blast injuries;

11 “(2) the education and training of health care
12 personnel of the Department; and

13 “(3) the development of improved models and
14 systems for the furnishing of services by the Depart-
15 ment for blast injuries.

16 “(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—(1) The Secretary shall es-
17 tablish and operate at least one, but not more than three,
18 centers for research, education, and clinical activities on
19 blast injuries.

20 “(2) Each center shall function as a center for—

21 “(A) research on blast injury to support the
22 provision of services in accordance with the most
23 current evidence on blast injuries, with such re-
24 search to specifically address injury epidemiology
25 and cost, functional outcomes, blast injury taxonomy

1 and measurement system, and longitudinal out-
2 comes;

3 “(B) the development of a rehabilitation pro-
4 gram for blast injuries, including referral protocol,
5 post-acute assessment, and coordination of com-
6 prehensive treatment services;

7 “(C) the development of protocols to optimize
8 linkages between the Department and the Depart-
9 ment of Defense on matters relating to research,
10 education, and clinical activities on blast injuries;

11 “(D) the creation of innovative models for edu-
12 cation and outreach on health-care and related reha-
13 bilitation and education services on blast injuries,
14 with such education and outreach to target those
15 who have sustained a blast injury and health care
16 providers and researchers in the Veterans Health
17 Administration, the Department of Defense, and the
18 Department of Homeland Security;

19 “(E) the development of educational tools and
20 products on blast injuries, and the maintenance of
21 such tools and products in a resource clearinghouse
22 that can serve as resources for the Veterans Health
23 Administration, the Department of Defense, the De-
24 partment of Homeland Security, and other depart-
25 ments and agencies of the Federal Government;

1 “(F) the development of interdisciplinary train-
2 ing programs on the provision of health care and re-
3 habilitation care services for blast injuries that pro-
4 vide an integrated understanding of the continuum
5 of care for such injuries to the broad range of pro-
6 viders of such services, including first responders,
7 acute-care providers, and rehabilitation service pro-
8 viders; and

9 “(G) the implementation of strategies for im-
10 proving the medical diagnostic coding of blast inju-
11 ries in the Department to reliably identify veterans
12 with blast injuries and track outcomes over time.

13 “(3) The Secretary shall designate a designate a cen-
14 ter or centers under this section upon the recommendation
15 of the Under Secretary for Health.

16 “(4) The Secretary may designate a center under this
17 section only if—

18 “(A) the proposal submitted for the designation
19 of the center meets the requirements of subsection
20 (c);

21 “(B) the Secretary makes the finding described
22 in subsection (d); and

23 “(C) the peer review panel established under
24 subsection (e) makes the determination specified in
25 subsection (e)(3) with respect to that proposal.

1 “(5) The authority of the Secretary to establish and
2 operate centers under this section is subject to the appro-
3 priation of funds for that purpose.

4 “(c) PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS.—A proposal sub-
5 mitted for the designation of a center under this section
6 shall—

7 “(1) provide for close collaboration in the estab-
8 lishment and operation of the center, and for the
9 provision of care and the conduct of research and
10 education at the center, by a Department facility or
11 facilities (in this subsection referred to as the ‘col-
12 laborating facilities’) in the same geographic area
13 that have a mission centered on the care of individ-
14 uals with blast injuries and a Department facility in
15 that area which has a mission of providing tertiary
16 medical care;

17 “(2) provide that not less than 50 percent of
18 the funds appropriated for the center for support of
19 clinical care, research, and education will be pro-
20 vided to the collaborating facilities with respect to
21 the center; and

22 “(3) provide for a governance arrangement
23 among the facilities described in paragraph (1) with
24 respect to the center that ensures that the center
25 will be established and operated in a manner aimed

1 at improving the quality of care for blast injuries at
2 the collaborating facilities with respect to the center.

3 “(d) FINDINGS RELATING TO PROPOSALS.—The
4 finding referred to in subsection (b)(4)(B) with respect to
5 a proposal for the designation of a site as a location of
6 a center under this section is a finding by the Secretary,
7 upon the recommendation of the Under Secretary for
8 Health, that the facilities submitting the proposal have de-
9 veloped (or may reasonably be anticipated to develop) each
10 of the following:

11 “(1) An arrangement with an affiliated accred-
12 ited medical school or university that provides edu-
13 cation and training in disaster preparedness, home-
14 land security, and biodefense.

15 “(2) Comprehensive and effective treatment
16 services for head injury, spinal cord injury, audi-
17 ology, amputation, gait and balance, and mental
18 health.

19 “(3) The ability to attract scientists who have
20 demonstrated achievement in research—

21 “(A) into the evaluation of innovative ap-
22 proaches to the rehabilitation of blast injuries;
23 or

24 “(B) into the treatment of blast injuries.

1 “(4) The capability to evaluate effectively the
2 activities of the center, including activities relating
3 to the evaluation of specific efforts to improve the
4 quality and effectiveness of services on blast injuries
5 that are provided by the Department at or through
6 individual facilities.

7 “(e) DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT ON EVALUATION OF
8 CENTER PROPOSALS.—(1) In order to provide advice to
9 assist the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health
10 to carry out their responsibilities under this section, the
11 official within the central office of the Veterans Health
12 Administration responsible for blast injury matters shall
13 establish a peer review panel to assess the scientific and
14 clinical merit of proposals that are submitted to the Sec-
15 retary for the designation of centers under this section.

16 “(2) The panel shall consist of experts in the fields
17 of research, education and training, and clinical care on
18 blast injuries. Members of the panel shall serve as consult-
19 ants to the Department.

20 “(3) The panel shall review each proposal submitted
21 to the panel by the official referred to in paragraph (1)
22 and shall submit to that official its views on the relative
23 scientific and clinical merit of each such proposal. The
24 panel shall specifically determine with respect to each such
25 proposal whether or not that proposal is among those pro-

1 posals which have met the highest competitive standards
 2 of scientific and clinical merit.

3 “(4) The panel shall not be subject to the Federal
 4 Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.).

5 “(f) AWARD OF FUNDING.—Clinical and scientific in-
 6 vestigation activities at each center established under this
 7 section—

8 “(1) may compete for the award of funding
 9 from amounts appropriated for the Department for
 10 medical and prosthetics research; and

11 “(2) shall receive priority in the award of fund-
 12 ing from such amounts insofar as funds are awarded
 13 from such amounts to projects and activities relating
 14 to blast injuries.

15 “(g) DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.—(1) The
 16 Under Secretary for Health shall ensure that information
 17 produced by the centers established under this section that
 18 may be useful for other activities of the Veterans Health
 19 Administration is disseminated throughout the Adminis-
 20 tration.

21 “(2) Information shall be disseminated under this
 22 subsection through publications, through programs of con-
 23 tinuing medical and related education provided through
 24 regional medical education centers under subchapter VI
 25 of chapter 74 of this title, and through other means. Such

1 programs of continuing medical education shall receive
2 priority in the award of funding.

3 “(h) SUPERVISION.—The official within the central
4 office of the Veterans Health Administration responsible
5 for blast injury matters shall be responsible for super-
6 vising the operation of the centers established under this
7 section and shall provide for ongoing evaluation of the cen-
8 ters and their compliance with the requirements of this
9 section.

10 “(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—(1)
11 There are authorized to be appropriated to the Depart-
12 ment of Veterans Affairs for the centers established under
13 this section amounts as follows:

14 “(A) \$3,125,000 for fiscal year 2005.

15 “(B) \$6,250,000 for each of fiscal years 2006
16 through 2008.

17 “(2) In addition to amounts authorized to be appro-
18 priated by paragraph (1) for a fiscal year, the Under Sec-
19 retary for Health shall allocate to each center established
20 under this section, from other funds authorized to be ap-
21 propriated for such fiscal year for the Department gen-
22 erally for medical and for medical and prosthetics re-
23 search, such additional amounts as the Under Secretary
24 for Health determines appropriate to carry out the pur-
25 pose of this section.”.

1 (2) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter
 2 73 is amended by inserting after the item relating to sec-
 3 tion 7326, the following new item:

“7327. Centers for research, education, and clinical activities on
 blast injuries”.

4 (b) DESIGNATION OF CENTERS.—The Secretary of
 5 Veterans Affairs shall designate at least one center for re-
 6 search, education, and clinical activities on blast injuries
 7 as required by section 7327 of title 38, United States Code
 8 (as added by subsection (a)), not later than January 1,
 9 2005.

10 (c) ANNUAL REPORTS.—(1) Not later than February
 11 1 of each of 2006, 2007, and 2008, the Secretary shall
 12 submit to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Sen-
 13 ate and House of Representatives a report on the status
 14 and activities during the previous fiscal year of the center
 15 for research, education, and clinical activities on blast in-
 16 juries established under section 7327 of title 38, United
 17 States Code (as so added). Each such report shall include
 18 the following:

19 (A) A description of the activities carried out at
 20 each center, and the funding provided for such ac-
 21 tivities.

22 (B) A description of the advances made at each
 23 of the participating facilities of the each center in

1 research, education and training, and clinical activi-
2 ties on blast injuries .

3 (C) A description of the actions taken by the
4 Under Secretary for Health pursuant to subsection
5 (g) of that section (as so added) to disseminate in-
6 formation derived from such activities throughout
7 the Veterans Health Administration.

8 (D) The assessment of the Secretary of the ef-
9 fectiveness of the centers in fulfilling the purposes of
10 the centers.

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