

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3579

To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide sufficient blind rehabilitation outpatient specialists at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 28, 2005

Mr. MICHAUD (for himself and Mr. EVANS) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide sufficient blind rehabilitation outpatient specialists at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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 “Blinded Veterans Con-
5 tinuum of Care Act of 2005”.

1 **SEC. 2. BLIND REHABILITATION OUTPATIENT SPECIALISTS**
 2 **AT DEPARTMENT OF AFFAIRS MEDICAL FA-**
 3 **CILITIES.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—

5 (1) BLIND REHABILITATION OUTPATIENT SPE-
 6 CIALISTS.—Chapter 17 of title 38, United States
 7 Code, is amended by adding at the end the following
 8 new section:

9 **“§ 1718A. Blind rehabilitation outpatient specialists**
 10 **at Department medical facilities**

11 “(a) REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary shall assign at
 12 least one employee of the Veterans Health Administration
 13 who is designated as a blind rehabilitation outpatient spe-
 14 cialist to each specified medical facility of the Department.

15 “(b) SPECIFIED FACILITIES.—A medical facility of
 16 the Department is a specified facility for purposes of sub-
 17 section (a)—

18 “(1) if the facility has a visual impairment serv-
 19 ices team with a full-time coordinator; or

20 “(2) if the number of veterans enrolled in the
 21 system of patient enrollment under section 1705 of
 22 this title who are legally blind and who reside in the
 23 catchment area of that facility is in excess of 150.”.

24 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
 25 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
 26 by adding at the end the following new item:

“1718A. Blind rehabilitation outpatient specialists at Department of Affairs medical facilities.”.

1 (b) IMPLEMENTATION.—Subject to the availability of
2 appropriations for such purpose the Secretary of Veterans
3 Affairs shall ensure that section 1718A of title 38, United
4 States Code, as added by subsection (a), is fully imple-
5 mented not later than the end of the four-year period be-
6 ginning on the date of the enactment of this Act. The Sec-
7 retary shall carry out such implementation as follows:

8 (1) As of the end of the one-year period begin-
9 ning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the
10 Secretary shall ensure that such section is imple-
11 mented at least for each medical facility of the De-
12 partment covered by paragraph (2) of subsection (b)
13 of such section for which the number referred to in
14 that paragraph is in excess of 400.

15 (2) As of the end of the two-year period begin-
16 ning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the
17 Secretary shall ensure that such section is imple-
18 mented at least for each medical facility of the De-
19 partment covered by paragraph (2) of subsection (b)
20 of such section for which the number referred to in
21 that paragraph is in excess of 300.

22 (3) As of the end of the three-year period be-
23 ginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the
24 Secretary shall ensure that such section is imple-

1 mented at least for each medical facility of the De-
2 partment covered by paragraph (2) of subsection (b)
3 of such section for which the number referred to in
4 that paragraph is in excess of 200.

5 (c) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than March 31 of
6 each of the first four years after the enactment of this
7 Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Con-
8 gress a report on the implementation of section 1718A of
9 title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).
10 Each report shall—

11 (1) specify the number of blind rehabilitation
12 outpatient specialists assigned under that section
13 during the period covered by the report;

14 (2) identify the Department facility at which
15 each such specialist was assigned; and

16 (3) describe the effect of those assignments on
17 the continuum of care offered to blind and visually
18 impaired veterans.

19 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
20 are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Vet-
21 erans Affairs \$5,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2006
22 through 2010 and such sums as may be necessary for each
23 subsequent fiscal year to carry out section 1718A of title
24 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

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