

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3694

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide grants to rural counties to ensure they are able to offer a sufficient level of advice and casework services to help veterans learn about and obtain the benefits they have earned, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 7, 2005

Mr. WU introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide grants to rural counties to ensure they are able to offer a sufficient level of advice and casework services to help veterans learn about and obtain the benefits they have earned, 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 “Rural Veterans Serv-
5 ices Outreach Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS GRANT PRO-**
2 **GRAM FOR RURAL COUNTY VETERAN SERV-**
3 **ICE OFFICERS.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—

5 (1) GRANTS.—Chapter 5 of title 38, United
6 States Code, is amended by inserting after section
7 531 the following new section:

8 **“§ 532. Grants to assist certain rural counties in em-**
9 **ploying county veteran service officers;**
10 **professional qualifications**

11 “(a) GRANT PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall carry
12 out a program to make grants in accordance with this sec-
13 tion to provide financial assistance to eligible counties to
14 assist in the employment of county veteran service officers.

15 “(b) AMOUNT OF GRANT.—The amount of a grant
16 under this section to any county for any 12-month period
17 shall be \$12,000.

18 “(c) ELIGIBLE COUNTY.—For purposes of this sec-
19 tion, an eligible county is a county—

20 “(1) in which not less than 1,000 veterans re-
21 side;

22 “(2) in which no more than one veterans service
23 organization provides advice and casework services
24 for benefits provided under laws administered by the
25 Secretary; and

1 “(3) which, in accordance with standards and
2 classification of the Census Bureau, consists entirely
3 of territory, population, and housing units outside of
4 territory classified by the Census Bureau as an
5 ‘urban area’.

6 “(d) COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER.—For
7 purposes of this section, a county veteran service officer
8 is an employee of a county (regardless of job title) whose
9 duties include providing to veterans residing in the county
10 advice and casework services related to benefits provided
11 under laws administered by the Secretary.

12 “(e) GRANT APPLICATION.—An eligible county seek-
13 ing a grant under this section shall submit to the Sec-
14 retary an application for the grant. The application shall
15 be in such form and shall contain such information as the
16 Secretary may require, including information establishing
17 that the county is an eligible county under this section.

18 “(f) GRANT CRITERIA.—Subject to the availability of
19 appropriations for that purpose, the Secretary shall make
20 a grant under this section to any eligible county that—

21 “(1) does not have a county veterans service of-
22 ficer;

23 “(2) has a county veterans service officer who
24 performs county veterans service officer functions on
25 less than a full-time basis, if the county is able to

1 demonstrate a need for additional services by a
2 county veterans service officer; or

3 “(3) has a full-time county veterans service offi-
4 cer, but only if—

5 “(A) the county is a county in which not
6 less than 5,000 veterans reside; and

7 “(B) the county is able to demonstrate a
8 need for additional services by a county vet-
9 erans service officer.

10 “(g) GRANT FREQUENCY.—Grants under this section
11 shall be made on an annual basis.

12 “(h) PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS.—It is the
13 sense of Congress that the appropriate officials in counties
14 with one or more county veterans service officers should
15 take such steps as are available to them to encourage and
16 facilitate any such county veterans service officer in that
17 county in obtaining certification (either from the Depart-
18 ment or from appropriate State authorities) with respect
19 to professional qualifications to perform the functions of
20 a county veterans service officer.”.

21 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
22 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
23 by inserting after the item relating to section 531
24 the following new item:

“532. Grants to assist certain rural counties in employing county veteran service officers; professional qualifications.”.

1 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 532 of title 38,
2 United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take
3 effect on October 1, 2005.

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