

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4264

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 9, 2005

Mr. MCINTYRE introduced the following bill; which was 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 2005”.

6 **SEC. 2. IMPROVEMENT OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES WITHIN**
7 **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

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

1 “SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

2 “§ 561. Outreach activities: coordination of activities

3 within the Department

4 “(a) The Secretary shall establish and maintain pro-
5 cedures for ensuring the effective coordination of the out-
6 reach activities of the Department between and among the
7 following:

8 “(1) The Office of the Secretary.

9 “(2) The Office of Public Affairs.

10 “(3) The Veterans Health Administration.

11 “(4) The Veterans Benefits Administration.

12 “(5) The National Cemetery Administration.

13 “(b) The Secretary shall—

14 “(1) annually review the procedures in effect
15 under subsection (a) for the purpose of ensuring
16 that those procedures meet the requirements of that
17 subsection; and

18 “(2) make such modifications to those proce-
19 dures as the Secretary considers appropriate in light
20 of such review in order to better achieve that pur-
21 pose.

1 **“§ 562. Outreach activities: cooperative activities**
2 **with States; grants to States for improve-**
3 **ment of outreach**

4 “(a) It is the purpose of this section to provide for
5 assistance by the Secretary to the States in carrying out
6 programs within their respective jurisdiction that offer a
7 high probability of improving outreach and assistance to
8 veterans, and to the spouses, children, and parents of vet-
9 erans, so as to ensure that such individuals are fully in-
10 formed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans’
11 and veterans-related benefits and programs (including
12 State veterans’ programs) for which they may be eligible.

13 “(b) The Secretary shall ensure that, as a condition
14 of the provision of assistance by the Secretary under this
15 section, that such assistance is provided for outreach and
16 assistance under State and county veteran service pro-
17 grams referred to in subsection (a) in locations—

18 “(1) that have relatively large concentrations of
19 populations of veterans and other individuals re-
20 ferred to in subsection (a); or

21 “(2) that are experiencing growth in the popu-
22 lation of veterans and other individuals referred to
23 in subsection (a).

24 “(c) The Secretary may enter into cooperative agree-
25 ments and arrangements with State veterans agencies in
26 order to carry out, coordinate, improve, or otherwise en-

1 hance outreach by the Department and the States (includ-
2 ing outreach with respect to State veterans' programs).

3 “(d)(1) The Secretary may make grants to State vet-
4 erans agencies in order to achieve the following purposes:

5 “(A) To carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
6 erwise enhance outreach, including activities pursu-
7 ant to cooperative agreements and arrangements
8 under subsection (c).

9 “(B) To carry out, coordinate, improve, or oth-
10 erwise enhance activities to assist in the development
11 and submittal of claims for veterans' and veterans-
12 related benefits, including activities pursuant to co-
13 operative agreements and arrangements under sub-
14 section (c).

15 “(2) A State veterans agency receiving a grant under
16 this subsection shall use the grant amount for purposes
17 described in paragraph (1) by—

18 “(A) awarding a portion of such grant amount
19 to local governments of that State that provide vet-
20 erans outreach services, to be awarded on the basis
21 of the number of veterans residing in the jurisdiction
22 of that local government;

23 “(B) awarding a portion of such grant amount
24 to local governments in that State seeking to estab-
25 lish a program of outreach services; and

1 “(C) using the remainder for outreach activities
2 of that State veterans agency.

3 “(3) No portion of the amount of a grant to a State
4 under this subsection may be used at the State level for
5 the purpose of administering those funds.

6 “(4) Federal funds provided to a State by a grant
7 under this subsection may not be used to provide more
8 than 50 percent of the total cost of such State and local
9 government activities and shall be used to expand existing
10 outreach programs and services, not to supplant existing
11 State and local funding. The Secretary shall allocate funds
12 to the States for grants under this subsection on the basis
13 of the veteran population of the respective States.

14 “(5)(A) In a case in which a unit of local government
15 does not have a veteran services program, funds from a
16 grants under this subsection may be used to establish such
17 a program.

18 “(B) In a case in which a unit of local government
19 does not have such a program and does not seek to estab-
20 lish such a program through assistance from a grant
21 amount under this subsection, the State veterans agency
22 may use funds available under this subsection to provide
23 outreach services for that local government jurisdiction.

24 “(C) In the case of a State in which State and local
25 government veteran service programs do not seek to re-

1 ceive a grant amount under this subsection, the funds for
2 that State shall be reallocated to those States in which
3 local government veteran service programs exist and have
4 chosen to seek to receive a grant amount under this sub-
5 section.

6 “(6) Funds made available through a grant under
7 this subsection may be used for education and training
8 for State and local government employees who provide (or
9 when trained will provide) veterans outreach services in
10 order for those employees to obtain accreditation in ac-
11 cordance with procedures approved by the Secretary and,
12 for employees so accredited, for purposes of continuing
13 education.

14 “(7) In this subsection, the term ‘State veterans
15 agency’ means the element of the government of a State
16 that has responsibility for programs and activities of that
17 State government relating to veterans benefits.

18 **“§ 563. Outreach activities: funding**

19 “(a) Amounts for the outreach activities of the De-
20 partment under this subchapter shall be budgeted and ap-
21 propriated through a separate appropriation account.

22 “(b) In the budget justification materials submitted
23 to Congress in support of the Department budget for any
24 fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President
25 under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary shall in-

1 clude a separate statement of the amount requested to be
 2 appropriated for that fiscal year for the account specified
 3 in subsection (a).

4 **“§ 564. Definition of outreach**

5 “For purposes of this subchapter, the term ‘outreach’
 6 means the act or process of taking steps in a systematic
 7 manner to provide information, services, and benefits
 8 counseling to veterans, and the survivors of veterans, who
 9 may be eligible to receive benefits under the laws adminis-
 10 tered by the Secretary to ensure that those individuals are
 11 fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any
 12 benefits and programs under such laws for which they may
 13 be eligible.

14 **“§ 565. Authorization of appropriations**

15 “There are authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
 16 retary for the purposes of carrying out this subchapter,
 17 including the making of grants under section 562(d) of
 18 this title, the amount of \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal
 19 years 2006, 2007, and 2008.”.

20 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
 21 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding
 22 at the end the following new items:

“SUBCHAPTER IV—OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

“561. Outreach activities: coordination of activities within the Department.

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

“563. Outreach activities: funding.

“564. Definition of outreach.

“565. Authorization of appropriations.”.

