

109TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4355

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve services for veterans residing in rural areas.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 16, 2005

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

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## A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve services for veterans residing in rural areas.

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 and Training Act”.

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  
2           process of reaching out in a systematic manner to  
3           proactively provide information, services, and bene-  
4           fits counseling to veterans, and to the spouses, chil-  
5           dren, and parents of veterans, who may be eligible  
6           to receive benefits under the laws administered by  
7           the Secretary, and to ensure that such individuals  
8           are fully informed about, and assisted in applying  
9           for, any benefits and programs under such laws.”.

10 **SEC. 3. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS GRANT PRO-**  
11 **GRAM FOR RURAL COUNTY VETERAN SERV-**  
12 **ICE OFFICERS.**

13           (a) GRANTS.—Chapter 5 of title 38, United States  
14 Code, is amended by inserting after section 531 the fol-  
15 lowing new section:

16 **“§ 532. Grants to assist certain rural counties in**  
17 **training county veteran service officers**

18           “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to im-  
19 prove outreach and assistance to veterans, and to the  
20 spouses, children, and parents of veterans, who may be  
21 eligible to receive veterans’ or veterans-related benefits  
22 and who are residing in rural counties through the train-  
23 ing of rural county veteran service officers.

24           “(b) GRANT PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall carry  
25 out a program to make competitive grants in accordance

1 with this section to provide financial assistance to State  
2 departments of veteran affairs for the purpose stated in  
3 subsection (a).

4 “(c) AMOUNT OF GRANT.—The amount of a grant  
5 under this section shall be determined by the Secretary,  
6 but may not exceed \$50,000.

7 “(d) ELIGIBILITY.—For purposes of this section, a  
8 State is eligible for a grant under this section if it can  
9 demonstrate either of the following:

10 “(1) That it has at least one county, in which  
11 veterans reside, that does not have a trained county  
12 veterans service officer.

13 “(2) That it has at least one county, in which  
14 veterans reside, that has an employee who performs  
15 county veterans service officer functions and is able  
16 to demonstrate a need for training for that employee  
17 in those functions.

18 “(e) COMPETITION FOR GRANT.—An eligible State  
19 seeking a grant under this section shall submit to the Sec-  
20 retary an application for the grant. The application shall  
21 be in such form and shall contain such information as the  
22 Secretary may require, including information establishing  
23 that the State is an eligible State under this section. From  
24 the applications submitted the Secretary shall approve  
25 those applications that the Secretary determines to be the

1 most promising in carrying out the purposes of the grant  
2 program. Each State whose application is selected by the  
3 Secretary to receive a grant under the grant program shall  
4 receive funds in an amount determined by the Secretary  
5 under subsection (c). In making such determination, the  
6 Secretary shall take into consideration the amount of the  
7 total appropriation for the grant program, the relative size  
8 of the State's veteran population, and the funding nec-  
9 essary to improve outreach of veterans residing in rural  
10 counties through the training of county veteran service of-  
11 ficers in those counties. Such funds shall go to the State  
12 department of veterans' affairs.

13       “(f) REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE RECEIPT OF FED-  
14 ERAL FUNDS.—Each State receiving a grant under this  
15 section shall—

16               “(1) provide to the Secretary information and  
17       assurances that the funds received under the grant  
18       program for the training of county veteran service  
19       officers will go to assist counties which, in accord-  
20       ance with standards and classification of the Census  
21       Bureau, consist entirely of territory, population, and  
22       housing units outside of territory classified by the  
23       Census Bureau as an ‘urban area’;

24               “(2) provide an assurance that the State agency  
25       shall provide training in a manner consistent with

1       accepted State or national training programs for  
2       county veteran service officers;

3           “(3) use funds received under this section only  
4       to supplement the amount of funds that would, in  
5       the absence of such Federal funds, be made avail-  
6       able from non-Federal sources for the purposes of  
7       this section, and not to supplant such funds; and

8           “(4) submit a report to the Secretary not later  
9       than one year after the receipt of such grant out-  
10      lining how the grant money was spent, such report  
11      to be in such form and containing such information  
12      as the Secretary may require but including informa-  
13      tion on how the training was provided to county vet-  
14      erans services officers and the effect of such training  
15      on improving outreach to veterans residing in rural  
16      counties.

17      “(g) COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER.—For  
18      purposes of this section, a county veteran service officer  
19      is an employee of a county (regardless of job title) whose  
20      duties include providing to veterans residing in the county  
21      advice and casework services related to benefits provided  
22      under laws administered by the Secretary.

23      “(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
24      is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Vet-

1 erans' Affairs to carry out the provisions of this section  
2 \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2007 through 2010.”.

3 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections  
4 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting  
5 after the item relating to section 531 the following new  
6 item:

“532. Grants to assist certain rural counties in training county veteran service  
officers.”.

