

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 922

To improve treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder for veterans of service in Afghanistan and Iraq and the war on terrorism.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 17, 2005

Mr. FORD introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To improve treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder for veterans of service in Afghanistan and Iraq and the war on terrorism.

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 Mental
5 Health Services Enhancement Act of 2005”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TREATMENT**
2 **OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN**
3 **VETERANS.**

4 (a) ENHANCED TREATMENT CAPACITY.—

5 (1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

6 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
7 retary of Veterans Affairs for “Medical Care” the
8 amount of \$100,000,000 for the employment of ad-
9 ditional psychiatrists and other mental health serv-
10 ices specialists at Department of Veterans Affairs
11 medical centers and outpatient facilities specializing
12 in the diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic
13 stress disorder.

14 (2) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—Funds made
15 available pursuant to the authorization of appropria-
16 tions in paragraph (1) shall, to the extent funds are
17 available for such purpose, be used to employ at
18 least one psychiatrist and a complementary clinical
19 team at each medical center of the Department of
20 Veterans Affairs in order to conduct a specialized
21 program for the diagnosis and treatment of post-
22 traumatic stress disorder and to employ additional
23 mental health services specialists at the medical cen-
24 ter.

25 (b) OUTREACH AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL.—

1 (1) PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Veterans Af-
2 fairs shall, within the authorities of the Secretary
3 under title 38, United States Code, carry out a pro-
4 gram to provide outreach at the community level to
5 veterans who participated in Operation Iraqi Free-
6 dom or Operation Enduring Freedom and who are
7 or may be suffering from post-traumatic stress dis-
8 order.

9 (2) PROGRAM SITES.—The program shall be
10 carried out on a nationwide basis through facilities
11 of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

12 (3) PROGRAM CONTENT.—The program shall
13 provide for individualized case management to be
14 conducted on a one-on-one basis, counseling, edu-
15 cation, and group therapy to help participants cope
16 with post-traumatic stress disorder. The program—

17 (A) shall emphasize early identification of
18 veterans who may be experiencing symptoms of
19 post-traumatic stress disorder; and

20 (B) shall include group-oriented, peer-to-
21 peer settings for treatment.

22 (4) PROGRAM MODEL.—The Secretary shall es-
23 tablish and carry out the program under this sub-
24 section using as a model the program for the treat-
25 ment of post-traumatic stress disorder conducted at

1 the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center
2 in Memphis, Tennessee.

3 **SEC. 3. ARMED FORCES REVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH PRO-**
4 **GRAMS.**

5 (a) REVIEW OF MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS.—The
6 Secretary of each military department shall conduct a
7 comprehensive review of the mental health care programs
8 of the Armed Forces under the jurisdiction of that Sec-
9 retary in order to determine ways to improve the efficacy
10 of such care, including a review of joint Department of
11 Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs clinical
12 guidelines to ensure a seamless delivery of care during
13 transitions from active duty or reserve status to civilian
14 life.

15 (b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary of De-
16 fense shall submit to Congress a report setting forth the
17 results of each review under subsection (a). The report
18 shall be submitted not later than 90 days after the date
19 of the enactment of this Act.

20 **SEC. 4. TRANSITION TO VETERANS HEALTH CARE.**

21 The Secretary of each military department shall take
22 special care in providing for as seamless a transition as
23 possible from Department of Defense health care services
24 to Department of Veterans Affairs health care services in
25 the case of members of the Armed Forces who are being

1 discharged or separated from active duty and who have
2 been identified by the Secretary as having been exposed
3 to combat or otherwise as being at particular risk for post-
4 traumatic stress disorder.

5 **SEC. 5. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS.**

6 The Secretary of each military department and the
7 Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall assess privacy and pa-
8 tient confidentiality standards and practices of their re-
9 spective departments to ensure that those standards and
10 practices are adequate to protect the privacy of patients,
11 particularly in the case of patients seeking treatment for
12 post-traumatic stress disorder. Each of those Secretaries
13 shall also assess and identify other factors that may deter
14 members of the Armed Forces and veterans from seeking
15 treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

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