

109TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2351

To provide additional funding for mental health care for veterans, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 1, 2006

Mrs. BOXER (for herself, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. DAYTON) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To provide additional funding for mental health care for veterans, 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. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress makes the following findings:

5 (1) More than one in three soldiers and Ma-
6 rines who have served in Iraq later sought help for
7 mental health problems, according to an Army re-
8 port published in the Journal of the American Med-
9 ical Association.

1 (2) Of the members of the Armed Forces who
2 separated from military service after deployment to
3 Afghanistan and Iraq, 28 percent have enrolled in
4 health care programs administered by the Depart-
5 ment of Veterans Affairs. A higher percentage of
6 former members of the regular components of the
7 Armed Forces (31 percent) have enrolled in such
8 health care than have former members of the Na-
9 tional Guard and Reserves (25 percent).

10 (3) Between 2002 and 2005, almost 19,000
11 veterans of military service in Afghanistan and Iraq
12 were treated for post-traumatic stress disorder
13 (PTSD) through programs administered by the De-
14 partment of Veterans Affairs.

15 (4) According to the results of the first com-
16 prehensive screening of veterans from the war in
17 Iraq, conducted by the Army Center for Health Pro-
18 motion and Preventive Medicine, almost 1,700 mem-
19 bers of the Armed Forces returning from the war
20 said that they harbored thoughts of hurting them-
21 selves or that they would be better off dead. More
22 than 250 said that they had such thoughts “a lot”.
23 Nearly 20,000 such members reported nightmares or
24 unwanted war recollections, and more than 3,700

1 such members said they had concerns that they
 2 might “hurt or lose control” with someone else.

3 (5) A study published in the July 2004 New
 4 England Journal of Medicine revealed that 15.6 per-
 5 cent of Marines and 17.1 percent of soldiers sur-
 6 veyed after deployment in Iraq “met the screening
 7 criteria for major depression, generalized anxiety, or
 8 [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)]”.

9 **SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

10 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Depart-
 11 ment of Veterans Affairs for the Veterans Health Admin-
 12 istration for Medical Services for mental health care
 13 amounts that are not less than the following:

- 14 (1) \$3,600,000,000 in fiscal year 2007.
- 15 (2) \$4,100,000,000 in fiscal year 2008.
- 16 (3) \$4,600,000,000 in fiscal year 2009.
- 17 (4) \$5,100,000,000 in fiscal year 2010.
- 18 (5) \$5,600,000,000 in fiscal year 2011.

19 **SEC. 3. ANNUAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF NA-**
 20 **TIONAL MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN.**

21 (a) ANNUAL REPORT.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 17 of title 38,
 23 United States Code, is amended by inserting after
 24 section 1704 the following new section:

1 **“§ 1704A. Mental health services: annual report on**
2 **implementation of national strategic plan**

3 “(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) Not later than April 15 each
4 year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Vet-
5 erans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives
6 a report that describes the progress of the Department
7 in meeting each milestone specified in the national mental
8 health strategic plan of the Department.

9 “(2) Each report under this subsection shall set
10 forth, for each milestone covered by such report, the fol-
11 lowing:

12 “(A) The amount of funds expended during the
13 fiscal year preceding the fiscal year in which such
14 report is submitted to meet such milestone.

15 “(B) A description of the extent to which such
16 milestone is based on the adoption by the Secretary
17 of the recommendations of the President’s new Free-
18 dom Commission on Mental Health.

19 “(b) INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT.—Each report sub-
20 mitted under subsection (a) shall include an independent
21 assessment of the progress of the Department in imple-
22 menting the milestones described in that subsection. The
23 independent assessment shall be made by the Special
24 Committee on Veterans with Serious Mental Illness, the
25 Special Committee on Veterans with PTSD, and the Advi-
26 sory Committee on Homeless Veterans.”.

1 (2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
2 tions at the beginning of such chapter is amended
3 by inserting after the item relating to section 1704
4 the following new item:

 “1704A. Mental health services: annual report on implementation of na-
 tional strategic plan.”.

5 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
6 this section shall take effect on December 15, 2006.

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