

110TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 1569

To establish a pilot program on the provision of legal services to assist veterans and members of the Armed Forces receive health care, benefits and services, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 7, 2007

Mr. FEINGOLD introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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## A BILL

To establish a pilot program on the provision of legal services to assist veterans and members of the Armed Forces receive health care, benefits and services, 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 Advocacy Act

5       of 2007”.

1   **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM ON PROVISION OF LEGAL ASSIST-**  
2                   **ANCE TO ASSIST VETERANS AND MEMBERS**  
3                   **OF THE ARMED FORCES RECEIVE HEALTH**  
4                   **CARE, BENEFITS, AND SERVICES.**

5           (a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

6                   (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans  
7                   Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to assess the  
8                   feasibility and advisability of utilizing eligible enti-  
9                   ties to provide legal services to assist veterans and  
10                  members of the Armed Forces in applying for and  
11                  receiving health care, benefits, and services.

12                  (2) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary of Vet-  
13                  erans Affairs shall carry out the pilot program in  
14                  consultation with the Secretary of Defense.

15           (b) GRANTS.—

16                   (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans  
17                  Affairs shall carry out the pilot program through the  
18                  award of grants to eligible entities selected by the  
19                  panel established in accordance with subsection  
20                  (d)(1) for—

21                   (A) the provision of legal services at no  
22                  cost to members of the Armed Forces and vet-  
23                  erans as described in subsection (a)(1); or

24                   (B) the provision of legal training to attor-  
25                  neys of eligible entities on the health and bene-  
26                  fits programs of the Department of Defense

1 and the Department of Veterans Affairs to fa-  
2 cilitate the provision of legal services described  
3 in subsection (a)(1).

4 (2) AWARDING GRANTS.—Grants under this  
5 subsection shall be awarded to eligible entities se-  
6 lected pursuant to subsection (d) not later than 180  
7 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

8 (3) NUMBER OF GRANTS.—

9 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall  
10 award 10 grants under the pilot program.

11 (B) STATE-DESIGNATED PROTECTION AND  
12 ADVOCACY SYSTEMS.—Not less than five of the  
13 grants awarded under the pilot program shall  
14 be awarded to State-designated protection and  
15 advocacy systems.

16 (4) GRANT AMOUNT.—The amount of each  
17 grant awarded under the pilot program shall be de-  
18 termined by the selection panel described in sub-  
19 section (d)(1), except that each such grant may not  
20 be awarded in an amount that—

21 (A) exceeds \$100,000; or

22 (B) is less than \$25,000.

23 (5) DURATION.—The duration of any grant  
24 awarded under the pilot program may not exceed  
25 one year.

7 (c) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—For purposes of this sub-  
8 section, an eligible entity is any entity or organization, in-  
9 cluding a State-designated protection and advocacy sys-  
10 tems, that—

13 (2) provides legal services by licensed attorneys  
14 with experience assisting veterans, members of the  
15 Armed Forces, or persons with disabilities.

16 (d) SELECTION OF GRANT RECIPIENTS.—

17 (1) SELECTION BY PANEL.—

(B) MEMBERSHIP OF PANEL.—Members of the panel shall be appointed in equal numbers from among individuals as follows:

(i) Officers and employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(ii) With the approval of the Secretary of Defense, officers and employees of the Department of Defense.

(iii) Representatives of veterans service organizations.

(iv) Representatives of organizations that provide services to members of the Armed Forces.

(v) Attorneys that represent veterans.

(vi) Attorneys employed by a State-designated protection and advocacy system.

(2) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity seeking a grant under the pilot program shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs an application therefor in such form and in such manner as the Secretary considers appropriate.

22 (3) ELEMENTS.—Each application submitted  
23 under paragraph (2) shall include the following:

1 (A) In the case of an eligible entity applying  
2 for a grant under subsection (b)(1)(A), the  
3 following:

4 (i) A description of the population of  
5 members of the Armed Forces and vet-  
6 erans to be provided assistance.

12 (B) In the case of an eligible entity apply-  
13 ing for a grant under subsection (b)(1)(B), the  
14 following:

15 (i) A description of the population of  
16 attorneys to be provided training.

21 (C) In the case of an eligible entity apply-  
22 ing for a grant under subparagraphs (A) and  
23 (B) of subsection (b)(1), the elements described  
24 in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of this para-  
25 graph.

1       (e) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date  
2 described in subsection (b)(2), the Secretary of Veterans  
3 Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
4 of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of  
5 the House of Representatives a report on the pilot pro-  
6 gram required by subsection (a), including the following:

7               (1) The number of veterans and members of  
8 the Armed Forces that received assistance or serv-  
9 ices from such pilot program.

10              (2) A description of the assistance and services  
11 provided as part of such pilot program.

12       (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

13               (1) STATE-DESIGNATED PROTECTION AND AD-  
14 VOCACY SYSTEM.—The term “State-designated pro-  
15 tection and advocacy system” means a system estab-  
16 lished in a State to protect the legal and human  
17 rights of individuals with developmental disabilities  
18 in accordance with subtitle C of the Developmental  
19 Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of  
20 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15041 et seq.).

21               (2) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—The  
22 term “veterans service organization” means any or-  
23 ganization organized by the Secretary of Veterans  
24 Affairs for the representation of veterans under sec-  
25 tion 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

1        (g) FUNDING.—Of amounts appropriated for “De-  
2 fense Health Program” in the U.S. Troop Readiness, Vet-  
3 erans’ Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability  
4 Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110–28),  
5 \$1,000,000 shall be available for fiscal year 2008 to carry  
6 out the provisions of this section and not for the purposes  
7 for which appropriated by such Act. Any amount made  
8 available by this subsection shall remain available without  
9 fiscal year limitation.

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