

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2383

To require a pilot program on the mobile provision of care and services for veterans in rural areas by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 16, 2007

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. GRASSLEY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require a pilot program on the mobile provision of care and services for veterans in rural areas by 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. PILOT PROGRAM ON MOBILE PROVISION OF**
4 **CARE AND SERVICES FOR VETERANS IN**
5 **RURAL AREAS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VET-**
6 **ERANS AFFAIRS.**

7 (a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
9 Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to assess the

1 feasibility and advisability of providing care and
2 services described in subsection (d) to veterans resid-
3 ing in rural areas through the mobile system de-
4 scribed in subsection (e).

5 (2) DESIGNATION.—The pilot program shall be
6 known as the “Mobile Support for Rural Veterans
7 Program” (in this section referred to as the “pilot
8 program”).

9 (b) GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.—

10 (1) PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY.—The Sec-
11 retary shall carry out the pilot program through the
12 Director of the Office of Rural Health of the De-
13 partment of Veterans Affairs.

14 (2) CONSULTATION.—The pilot program shall
15 be developed and carried out in consultation with the
16 following:

17 (A) The Regional Director of Veterans In-
18 tegrated Services Network (VISN) 23, in which
19 mobile Department of Veterans Affairs clinics
20 are currently in operation.

21 (B) The Director of the Office of Rural
22 Health Policy of the Department of Health and
23 Human Services.

1 (C) The agencies or offices for rural health
2 in the States selected for participation in the
3 pilot program.

4 (D) The country or local agencies or of-
5 fices for rural health in the areas designated for
6 the pilot program.

7 (c) LOCATIONS.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The pilot program shall be
9 carried out in not less than three Veterans Inte-
10 grated Services Networks selected by the Secretary
11 for purposes of the pilot program.

12 (2) RURAL AREAS WITHIN VISNS.—The pilot
13 program shall be carried out in one or more rural
14 areas in each Veterans Integrated Services Network
15 selected under paragraph (1) that are designated by
16 the Secretary for purposes of the pilot program in
17 consultation with the Regional Director of such Vet-
18 erans Integrated Services Network. In designating
19 such areas, the Secretary shall take into account—

20 (A) the number of veterans residing in or
21 near an area; and

22 (B) the difficulty of access of such vet-
23 erans to the nearest Department of Veterans
24 Affairs medical facility, whether by reason of
25 ravel or other factors.

1 (d) CARE AND SERVICES PROVIDED.—The care and
2 services provided under the pilot program shall include,
3 but not be limited to, care and services as follows:

4 (1) Counseling and education for veterans on
5 accessing such health care, educational, pension, or
6 other benefits for which veterans may eligible under
7 the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans
8 Affairs.

9 (2) Assistance for veterans in completing paper-
10 work necessary for enrollment in the health care sys-
11 tem of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

12 (3) The prescription for and delivery to vet-
13 erans of medications for which veterans are entitled
14 under such laws, including, in particular, medica-
15 tions for veterans suffering from acute or chronic in-
16 juries or illnesses.

17 (4) Mental health screenings for veterans to
18 identify potential mental health disorders such as
19 post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or a sub-
20 stance abuse, including, in particular, for veterans
21 recently discharged or released after service overseas
22 in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring
23 Freedom.

1 (5) Job placement assistance and information
2 on employment or training opportunities for vet-
3 erans.

4 (6) Substance abuse counseling for veterans.

5 (7) Bereavement counseling for families of
6 members of the Armed Forces who were killed in
7 military service.

8 (8) Such other care, services, and assistance as
9 the Secretary considers appropriate for purposes of
10 the pilot program.

11 (e) MOBILE SYSTEM.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—Care and services under the
13 pilot program shall be provided through a mobile
14 system established for purposes of the pilot program
15 that meets the requirements of this subsection.

16 (2) PERSONNEL.—In providing care and serv-
17 ices under the pilot program, the mobile system shall
18 transport to the areas designated for the pilot pro-
19 gram personnel as follows:

20 (A) Department of Veterans Affairs physi-
21 cians, nurses, and mental health specialists.

22 (B) Department of Veterans Affairs case-
23 work officers.

24 (C) Department of Veterans Affairs bene-
25 fits counselors.

1 (D) Such other personnel of the Depart-
2 ment as the Secretary considers appropriate for
3 purposes of the pilot program.

4 (3) ADDITIONAL MATERIALS.—In providing
5 care and services under the pilot program, the mo-
6 bile system shall transport also such equipment,
7 forms, information, and other materiel as are nec-
8 essary for the provision of care and services under
9 the pilot program.

10 (4) VISITS.—

11 (A) FREQUENCY.—The mobile system
12 shall visit each area designated for the pilot
13 program at least once each 45 days.

14 (B) DURATION.—The mobile system shall
15 be present in an area designated for the pilot
16 program during each visit under subparagraph

17 (A) for a period of not less than 48 hours

18 (f) COORDINATION REQUIREMENTS.—

19 (1) IDENTIFICATION OF VETERANS NOT EN-
20 ROLLED IN VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.—In carrying
21 out the pilot program, the Secretary of Veterans Af-
22 fairs and the Secretary of Defense shall jointly un-
23 dertake actions to identify veterans residing in areas
24 designated for the pilot program who are not en-

1 rolled in, or otherwise being cared for by, the health
2 care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

3 (2) COORDINATION WITH COUNTY AND LOCAL
4 VETERANS SERVICE OFFICES.—In carrying out the
5 pilot program, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
6 shall coordinate with county and local veterans serv-
7 ice officers in areas designated for the pilot program
8 to—

9 (A) establish contact with veterans in such
10 areas who are not enrolled in the health care
11 system of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

12 (B) inform veterans in such areas, in ad-
13 vance, of the date and location of visits of the
14 mobile system under subsection (e) to such
15 areas; and

16 (C) identify possibilities to complete nec-
17 essary paperwork or preparation for veterans to
18 maximize the effectiveness of the pilot program.

19 (3) UTILIZATION OF COMMUNITY-BASED OUT-
20 PATIENT CLINICS.—The pilot program shall, to the
21 extent practicable, utilize appropriate personnel and
22 resources of community-based outpatient clinics of
23 the Department of Veterans Affairs in areas des-
24 ignated for the pilot program, including the inclusion

1 of such personnel in visits of the mobile system
2 under subsection (e).

3 (g) REPORTS.—Not later than 16 months after the
4 commencement of the pilot program, and every 180 days
5 thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees
6 on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Rep-
7 resentatives a report on the pilot program. The report
8 shall include the following:

9 (1) A description and assessment of the imple-
10 mentation of the pilot program.

11 (2) An assessment, current as of the date of the
12 report, of the effectiveness of the pilot program in
13 providing care and services to veterans residing in
14 rural areas, including a comparative assessment of
15 effectiveness for each of the various areas designated
16 for the pilot program.

17 (3) An assessment, current as of the date of the
18 report, of the effectiveness of the coordination de-
19 scribed in subsection (f) in contributing toward the
20 effectiveness of the pilot program.

21 (4) Such recommendations as the Secretary
22 considers appropriate for modifications of the pilot
23 program in order to better provide care and services
24 to veterans residing in rural areas.

1 (h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
2 hereby authorized to be appropriated for the Department
3 of Veterans Affairs to carry out this section amounts as
4 follows:

- 5 (1) \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2008.
6 (2) \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2009.
7 (3) \$10,000,000 for fiscal year 2010.

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