

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1401

To create a service corps of veterans called Veterans Engaged for Tomorrow (VET) Corps focused on promoting and improving the service opportunities for veterans and retired members of the military by engaging such veterans and retired members in projects designed to meet identifiable public needs with a specific emphasis on projects to support veterans, including disabled and older veterans and retired members of the military.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 9, 2009

Mr. SARBANES (for himself, Mr. HARE, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. WILSON of Ohio, Mr. MOLLOHAN, Mr. ROTHMAN of New Jersey, Ms. SUTTON, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. SIRES, Mr. ARCURI, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Ms. DEGETTE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To create a service corps of veterans called Veterans Engaged for Tomorrow (VET) Corps focused on promoting and improving the service opportunities for veterans and retired members of the military by engaging such veterans and retired members in projects designed to meet identifiable public needs with a specific emphasis on projects to support veterans, including disabled and older veterans and retired members of the military.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
3 “VET Corps Act of 2009”.

4 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—

Sec. 1. Short title; Table of Contents.

Sec. 2. VET Corps.

“Subtitle J—VET Corps

“Sec. 199AA. Purposes of Vet Corps.

“Sec. 199BB. Establishment of VET Corps; Administrative provisions.

“Sec. 199CC. VET Corps members.

“Sec. 199DD. Authority to provide assistance to VET Corps projects.

“Sec. 199EE. Consultation.

“Sec. 199FF. Training and Technical assistance.

“Sec. 199GG. Definitions.

Sec. 3. Authorization of Appropriations.

5 **SEC. 2. VET CORPS.**

6 (a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

7 (1) The veteran population is estimated by the
8 Department of Veterans Affairs to be around
9 23,400,000 and growing.

10 (2) Today, an estimated 1,640,000 United
11 States troops have deployed as part of Operation
12 Enduring Freedom (OEF; Afghanistan) and Oper-
13 ation Iraqi Freedom (OIF; Iraq). In total 2,950,000
14 veterans receive disability compensation, with
15 261,897 having a 100 percent disability rating. As
16 of September of 2007, 223,564 OEF/OIF veterans
17 filed for disability claims.

18 (3) A 2007 survey for the Department of Vet-
19 erans Affairs discovered veterans of all ages tend to

1 have an unemployment rate double that of similar
2 nonveterans, with returning veterans experiencing
3 the highest rate of unemployment at 18 percent.

4 (4) Veterans often have difficulty transitioning
5 to civilian life.

6 (5) Military and national service is a foundation
7 for a continued commitment to service.

8 (6) The specific experience and expertise of vet-
9 erans make them uniquely qualified to serve other
10 veterans.

11 (7) The Civilian Conservations Corps (CCC) es-
12 tablished in 1933, which provided work and voca-
13 tional training for 3,500,000 unemployed young
14 Americans, was one of the singularly successful Fed-
15 eral programs in American history.

16 (8) The Senior Corps established in 1973 to ex-
17 pand the role of older volunteers, enrolls more than
18 500,000 volunteers each year and in their first 10
19 years contributed over 1,100,000,000 hours of serv-
20 ice to communities nationwide.

21 (9) In a manner similar to the CCC of the
22 1930s and the Senior Corps of today, veterans can
23 be mobilized to perform outreach to the veteran
24 community to guide them to appropriate services
25 and assist them in necessary activities.

1 (b) GENERAL AUTHORITY.—Title I of the National
2 and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511
3 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

4 **“Subtitle J—VET Corps**

5 **“SEC. 199AA. PURPOSES OF VET CORPS.**

6 “It is the purpose of this subtitle to authorize the
7 establishment of Veterans Engaged for Tomorrow Corps
8 (in this Act referred to as ‘VET Corps’)—

9 “(1) to create a service corps of veterans, com-
10 posed of veterans, retired military personnel, or fam-
11 ily members of veterans, or retired military per-
12 sonnel to help such individuals to obtain job train-
13 ing, professional certification, or access to post-sec-
14 ondary education or employers and otherwise to
15 serve their communities through national and com-
16 munity service programs;

17 “(2) to create a service corps that supports ex-
18 isting outreach efforts of Veteran Service Organiza-
19 tions, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the
20 Department of Defense in order to inform veterans
21 about available services and benefits;

22 “(3) to create a service corps that will act as
23 a clearinghouse to direct any person desiring to
24 serve the veteran population to such opportunities in
25 cooperation with other service corps programs, Vet-

1 erans Service Organizations, the Department of Vet-
2 erans Affairs, and the Department of Defense;

3 “(4) to create a service corps to coordinate with
4 the Veteran Service Organizations, the Department
5 of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and
6 other Federal agencies to identify and address exist-
7 ing and future needs and challenges of veterans; and

8 “(5) to create a service corps that provides vet-
9 erans of all ages with opportunities to adjust to civil-
10 ian life.

11 **“SEC. 199BB. ESTABLISHMENT OF VET CORPS; ADMINIS-**
12 **TRATIVE PROVISIONS.**

13 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Corporation shall establish
14 VET Corps to carry out the purposes described in section
15 199AA.

16 “(b) STAFF.—

17 “(1) APPOINTMENT.—Upon the establishment
18 of VET Corps, the Chief Executive Officer shall ap-
19 point a Director. The Director may be selected from
20 among retired commissioned officers of the Armed
21 Forces of the United States.

22 “(2) DUTIES.—The Director shall—

23 “(A) design, develop, and administer the
24 VET Corps programs;

1 “(B) be responsible for managing the daily
2 operations of the Corps; and

3 “(C) report to the Chief Executive Officer.

4 “(3) AUTHORITY TO EMPLOY STAFF.—The Di-
5 rector may employ such staff as is necessary to
6 carry out this subtitle. The Director shall, to the
7 maximum extent practicable, utilize in staff positions
8 personnel who are detailed from departments and
9 agencies of the Federal Government and, to the ex-
10 tent the Director considers appropriate, shall request
11 and accept detail of personnel from such depart-
12 ments and agencies in order to do so.

13 “(4) INAPPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN CIVIL SERV-
14 ICE LAWS.—The Director and staff personnel shall
15 be appointed without regard to provisions of title 5,
16 United States Code, governing appointments in the
17 competitive service. The rates of pay of such persons
18 may be established without regard to the provisions
19 of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of
20 such title.

21 “(5) VOLUNTARY SERVICES.—Notwithstanding
22 any other provision of law, the Director may accept
23 the voluntary services of individuals. While away
24 from their homes or regular places of business on
25 the business of the Corps, such individuals may be

1 allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of
2 subsistence, in the same amounts and to the same
3 extent, as authorized under section 5703 of title 5,
4 United States Code, for persons employed intermit-
5 tently in the Federal Government.

6 **“SEC. 199CC. VET CORPS MEMBERS.**

7 “(a) MEMBERSHIP IN VET CORPS.—

8 “(1) PARTICIPANTS TO BE MEMBERS.—Persons
9 selected to participate in any VET Corps project re-
10 ceiving a grant under the 199DD shall become mem-
11 bers of the VET Corps.

12 “(2) SELECTION OF MEMBERS.—The Director
13 shall select individuals for membership in the Corps.
14 Such individuals shall consist of veterans, retired
15 military personnel, or family members of veterans or
16 retired military personnel, with preference given to
17 veterans and retired military personnel.

18 “(b) APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.—To be se-
19 lected to become a Corps member an individual shall sub-
20 mit an application to the Director or any other office as
21 the Director may designate, at such time, in such manner,
22 and containing such information as the Director shall re-
23 quire. At a minimum, the application shall contain an as-
24 surance that the individual is a veteran or retired military

1 personnel who did not withdraw from military service for
2 the purpose of becoming a member of VET Corps.

3 “(c) DURATION.—Individuals may be members of
4 VET Corps for up to 24 months.

5 “(d) STATUS OF CORPS MEMBERS UNDER FEDERAL
6 LAW.—Except as otherwise provided in this subtitle, mem-
7 bers of VET Corps shall not, by reason of their status
8 as such members, be considered Federal employees or be
9 subject to the provisions of law relating to Federal employ-
10 ment.

11 “(e) AUTHORIZED BENEFITS FOR CORPS MEM-
12 BERS.—

13 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall provide
14 for members of the VET Corps to receive benefits
15 authorized by this subsection.

16 “(2) LIVING ALLOWANCE.—The Director shall
17 provide a living allowance to members of the Corps
18 for the period during which such members are en-
19 gaged in residential Corps programs.

20 “(3) OTHER AUTHORIZED BENEFITS.—While
21 receiving training or engaging in service projects as
22 members of the VET Corps, members may be pro-
23 vided the following benefits:

24 “(A) Allowance for travel expenses, per-
25 sonal expenses, and other expenses.

1 “(B) Quarters.

2 “(C) Subsistence.

3 “(D) Transportation.

4 “(E) Other services determined by the Di-
5 rector to be consistent with the purposes of
6 VET Corps.

7 “(4) NATIONAL SERVICE EDUCATIONAL
8 AWARDS.—A Corps member who successfully com-
9 pletes a period of agreed service in the Corps shall
10 be considered to have served in an approved national
11 service position and, upon meeting the requirements
12 of section 147 for full-time or part-time national
13 service, shall be eligible for a national service edu-
14 cational award described in such section. The Cor-
15 poration (through the Director) shall transfer an ap-
16 propriate amount of funds to the National Service
17 Trust to provide for the national service educational
18 awards for such member.

19 “(5) HEALTH INSURANCE.—

20 “(A) IN GENERAL.—A VET Corps project
21 receiving assistance under section 199DD shall
22 provide a basic health care policy for each full-
23 time participant in a service project carried out
24 or supported using the assistance, if the partici-
25 pant is not otherwise covered by a health care

1 policy. Not more than 85 percent of the cost of
2 a premium shall be provided by the Director,
3 with the remaining cost paid by the entity re-
4 ceiving assistance under section 199DD. The
5 Director shall establish minimum standards
6 that all plans must meet in order to qualify for
7 payment under this section, any circumstances
8 in which an alternative health care policy may
9 be substituted for the basic health care policy,
10 and mechanisms to prohibit participants from
11 dropping existing coverage.

12 “(B) OPTION.—A VET Corps project re-
13 ceiving assistance under section 199DD may
14 elect to provide from its own funds a health
15 care policy for participants that does not meet
16 all of the standards established by the Director
17 if the fair market value of such policy is equal
18 to or greater than the fair market value of a
19 plan that meets the minimum standards estab-
20 lished by the Director, and is consistent with
21 other applicable laws.

22 “(6) DETERMINATION OF BENEFITS.—In deter-
23 mining the authorized benefits a member receives
24 under this subsection, the Director shall take into
25 account the educational, social, and family cir-

1 cumstances of such member, including whether such
2 member has graduated from an institution of higher
3 education, is unemployed, or has had contact with
4 the justice system.

5 **“SEC. 199DD. AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO VET**
6 **CORPS PROJECTS.**

7 “(a) PROVISION OF ASSISTANCE.—From amounts
8 appropriated for a fiscal year under section 501(a)(4), the
9 Corporation shall make grants to Veteran Service Organi-
10 zations, nonprofit organizations, Federal agencies, State
11 or local governments, or institutions of higher education
12 for the purpose of establishing, operating, and supporting
13 a VET Corps project.

14 “(b) APPLICATION.—

15 “(1) IN GENERAL.—To be eligible to receive as-
16 sistance under this section, a Veteran Service Orga-
17 nizations, nonprofit organization, Federal, State, or
18 local government, or institution of higher education
19 shall prepare and submit to the Director an applica-
20 tion at such time, in such manner, and containing
21 such information as the Corporation may reasonably
22 require.

23 “(2) REQUIRED INFORMATION.—An application
24 submitted under paragraph (1) shall include—

1 “(A) a description of how the VET Corps
2 project to be carried out directly by such appli-
3 cant using funds provided under this section—

4 “(i) will assist participants in obtain-
5 ing admission into an institution of higher
6 education, a job credential, further job
7 training, or employment;

8 “(ii) will meet all the VET indicators,
9 and engage participants in activities that
10 will improve the project’s performance on
11 such indicators; and

12 “(iii) will improve performance on the
13 VET indicators in a geographic area dem-
14 onstrating the need to improve such indica-
15 tors based on the demographic information
16 of veterans and retired military personnel
17 in such area and other statistics;

18 “(B) a description of the type of positions
19 which participants will be placed into using the
20 funds under this section, including descriptions
21 of the specific tasks to be performed by such
22 participants, and the minimum qualifications
23 that individuals will be required to meet to be-
24 come participants in such project;

1 “(C) the number of proposed full- and
2 part-time national service positions for which
3 participants will receive the national service
4 educational award described in subtitle D;

5 “(D) an assurance that the applicant will
6 comply with the nonduplication and non-
7 displacement provisions of section 177; and

8 “(E) a description of how the applicant—

9 “(i) in cooperation with other service
10 corps authorized under the national service
11 laws, Veterans Service Organizations, the
12 Department of Veterans Affairs, and the
13 Department of Defense will act as a clear-
14 inghouse by directing any person desiring
15 to serve the veteran population to such op-
16 portunities; and

17 “(ii) if applicable, will work with other
18 community-based agencies to carry out ac-
19 tivities to improve performance of the VET
20 Corps indicators

21 “(c) ELIGIBLE VET CORPS PROJECTS.—The recipi-
22 ent of a grant under this section shall use the grant funds
23 to carry out service projects that address veteran needs,
24 which may include—

1 “(1) building housing for veterans and others in
2 need of such services;

3 “(2) assisting with rehabilitative classes such as
4 physical therapy or life skills development;

5 “(3) providing services in veterans’ hospitals or
6 community-based outpatient clinics;

7 “(4) assisting with outreach of Veteran Services
8 Organizations and other service corps to help vet-
9 erans and retired military personnel with the transi-
10 tion from active duty service as a member of the
11 Armed Forces to becoming a veteran or retiring
12 from military life;

13 “(5) the repair, renovation, or adaption of
14 homes or vehicles of disabled veterans;

15 “(6) performing outreach to the veteran and re-
16 tired military personnel community to provide them
17 information and access to services available to them;

18 “(7) assisting in other such activities as a re-
19 cipient of a grant under this section may identify;

20 “(8) providing services to military families dur-
21 ing overseas deployment; and

22 “(9) fostering mentoring relationships between
23 veterans and nonveterans.

1 “(d) PREFERENCE FOR CERTAIN PROJECTS.—In the
2 consideration of applications submitted under this section,
3 the Director shall give preference to projects that—

4 “(1) provide development, training, and prac-
5 tical work experience for veterans and retired mem-
6 bers of the military in important career fields and
7 act as preparation for additional education or per-
8 manent employment for veterans and retired mem-
9 bers of the military which will provide long-term
10 benefits to the public;

11 “(2) can be planned and initiated promptly; and

12 “(3) will provide academic, experiential, or com-
13 munity education opportunities.

14 “(e) EVALUATION.—

15 “(1) EVALUATION.—Subject to paragraph (2),
16 the Director shall develop evaluation criteria and
17 performance goals, including recruitment and reten-
18 tion goals, applicable to all VET Corps projects car-
19 ried out with assistance provided under this section.

20 “(2) ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION REQUIRE-
21 MENTS.—The Director may establish alternative
22 evaluation requirements, such as requirements that
23 provide flexibility in the recruitment and retention
24 outcomes, for VET Corps projects based upon the

1 amount of assistance received in this section and the
2 demographics of participants.

3 **“SEC. 199EE. CONSULTATION.**

4 “The Director shall consult with the Secretary of Vet-
5 erans Affairs and Veteran Service Organizations, the Sec-
6 retary of Defense, and the heads of other Federal agen-
7 cies, as appropriate, in making grants under subsection
8 199DD, developing additional VET indicators, and in re-
9 cruiting VET Corps members.

10 **“SEC. 199FF. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**

11 “From amounts appropriated for a fiscal year under
12 section 501(a), the Director shall ensure that the VET
13 Corps (including each recipient of a grant under this sub-
14 title) has adequate access to relevant training and tech-
15 nical assistance services, such as services to assist with
16 improving performance on VET indicators, which shall be
17 provided, by grant or contract, through at least 1 national
18 non-profit organization with a demonstrated record of ex-
19 perience in promoting and disseminating effective prac-
20 tices among service corps.

21 **“SEC. 199GG. DEFINITIONS.**

22 “For the purposes of this subtitle:

23 “(a) VETERAN.—The term ‘veteran’ means a person
24 who—

1 “(1) serves on active duty (other than active
2 duty for training) as a member of the Armed
3 Forces—

4 “(A) for a period of at least 180 days; or

5 “(B) for a shorter period of time in the
6 case of a person who is discharged or released
7 from such service for a service-connected dis-
8 ability; and

9 “(2) is discharged or released from such service
10 under conditions other than dishonorable.

11 “(b) RETIRED MILITARY PERSONNEL.—The term
12 ‘retired military personnel’ means the following:

13 “(1) Regular and Reserve officers and enlisted
14 members who retire from the Military Services under
15 chapters 61, 63, 65, 67, 367, 571, 573, or 867 of
16 title 10, United States Code, and chapters 11 and
17 21 of title 14, United States Code.

18 “(2) Reserve officers and enlisted members eli-
19 gible for retirement who have not reached age 60
20 and who have not elected discharge or are not mem-
21 bers of the Ready Reserve or Standby Reserve (in-
22 cluding members of the Inactive Standby Reserve).

23 “(3) Members of the Fleet Reserve and Fleet
24 Marine Corps Reserve under section 6330 of title
25 10, United States Code.

1 “(c) VET INDICATORS.—The term ‘VET Indicators’
2 means—

3 “(1) promoting and improving the service op-
4 portunities for veterans;

5 “(2) engaging veterans and retired military per-
6 sonnel; and

7 “(3) projects designed to meet identifiable pub-
8 lic needs with a specific emphasis on projects in sup-
9 port of veterans, especially disabled and older vet-
10 erans and retired military personnel.”.

11 **SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

12 Section 501(a) of the National and Community Serv-
13 ice Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)) is amended—

14 (1) by inserting after paragraph (3) the fol-
15 lowing:

16 “(4) SUBTITLE J.—There are authorized to be
17 appropriated \$100,000,000 for each of fiscal years
18 2010 through 2014 to carry out subtitle J.”; and

19 (2) by redesignating paragraph (4) as para-
20 graph (5).

○