

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2699

To improve the mental health care benefits available to members of the Armed Forces, to enhance counseling available to family members of members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 4, 2009

Ms. GIFFORDS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, 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 the mental health care benefits available to members of the Armed Forces, to enhance counseling available to family members of members of the Armed Forces, 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 “Armed Forces Behav-
5 ioral Health Awareness Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ELIGIBILITY OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES**
2 **WHO SERVE IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM**
3 **OR OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM FOR**
4 **READJUSTMENT COUNSELING AND SERVICES**
5 **THROUGH VET CENTERS.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—A member of the Armed Forces,
7 including the Reserve components, who is deployed in sup-
8 port of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi
9 Freedom shall be eligible for readjustment counseling and
10 related mental health services under section 1712A of title
11 38, United States Code, through the centers for readjust-
12 ment counseling and related mental health services (com-
13 monly known as “Vet Centers”) operated by the Secretary
14 of Veterans Affairs under that section.

15 (b) ELIGIBILITY.—

16 (1) REGULATIONS.—Except as provided in
17 paragraph (2), the eligibility of a member of the
18 Armed Forces, including the Reserve components,
19 for counseling and services under subsection (a)
20 shall be subject to such regulations as the Secretary
21 of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
22 shall jointly prescribe for purposes of this section.

23 (2) DUTY STATUS.—The duty status of a mem-
24 ber may not have an effect on the eligibility of the
25 member to receive counseling and services under
26 subsection (a).

1 **SEC. 3. GRANTS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE**
2 **PROVISION OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERV-**
3 **ICES TO FAMILY MEMBERS OF MEMBERS OF**
4 **THE ARMED FORCES.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall
6 carry out a program to award grants to nonprofit organi-
7 zations that provide emotional support services for family
8 members of members of the Armed Forces, including the
9 Reserve components.

10 (b) AWARD OF GRANTS.—

11 (1) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible for a grant
12 under the program under this section, a nonprofit
13 organization shall meet such criteria as the Sec-
14 retary shall establish for purposes of the program.

15 (2) APPLICATION.—A nonprofit organization
16 seeking a grant under the program shall submit to
17 the Secretary an application for the grant in such
18 form and manner as the Secretary shall specify for
19 purposes of the program.

20 (c) GRANTS.—

21 (1) AMOUNT.—The amount of each grant
22 awarded to a nonprofit organization under the pro-
23 gram under this section shall be such amount as the
24 Secretary determines appropriate for purposes of the
25 program.

1 (2) DURATION.—The duration of each grant
2 awarded to a nonprofit organization shall be such
3 period as the Secretary determines appropriate for
4 purposes of the program.

5 (d) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—Each nonprofit organi-
6 zation awarded a grant under the program under this sec-
7 tion shall use amounts under the grant to provide emo-
8 tional support services for family members of members of
9 the Armed Forces, including the Reserve components,
10 through certain programs as the Secretary shall specify
11 in the grant.

12 (e) FUNDING.—Amounts for grants under the pro-
13 gram under this section shall be derived from amounts au-
14 thorized to be appropriated to the Department of Defense
15 for military personnel.

16 **SEC. 4. PILOT PROGRAM TO ENHANCE AWARENESS OF**
17 **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER.**

18 (a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of
19 the Army shall carry out a pilot program to enhance
20 awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder among mem-
21 bers of the Army. The Secretary shall carry out the pilot
22 program in the following locations:

- 23 (1) Fort Huachuca, Arizona.
24 (2) Fort Carson, Colorado.
25 (3) Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

1 (b) ACTIVITIES.—

2 (1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the pilot
3 program, the Secretary shall implement activities
4 that—

5 (A) for a member of the Army who will be
6 deployed in support of a contingency operation,
7 increase the understanding of—

8 (i) the neurophysiological effects of
9 stress and trauma associated with combat,
10 including post-traumatic stress disorder;
11 and

12 (ii) the means of eliminating or miti-
13 gating such effects after returning from
14 combat;

15 (B) for a member of the Army deployed in
16 support of a contingency operation, reinforce
17 the information provided under subparagraph
18 (A);

19 (C) for a member of the Army who returns
20 from being deployed in support of a contingency
21 operation, assist the member in reintegrating
22 into noncombat life; and

23 (D) for the family of a member of the
24 Army covered under this subsection, include
25 training and assistance (including Internet-

1 based training and assistance) at each stage of
2 deployment in order to assist the family and
3 member in recognizing and addressing post-
4 traumatic stress disorder.

5 (2) DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES.—In devel-
6 oping activities under this subsection, the Secretary
7 shall consider methods to address stress and trauma
8 used by other appropriate populations, including
9 special operations forces and elite athlete commu-
10 nities.

11 (c) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the
12 pilot program for a period of three years.

13 (d) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the date
14 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit
15 to Congress a report assessing the pilot program, includ-
16 ing the effectiveness of the activities under subsection (b).

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