

111TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5203

To direct the Secretary of Defense to establish a center of excellence for the study of tinnitus, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 4, 2010

Mr. COLE (for himself and Mr. TEAGUE) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Defense to establish a center of excellence for the study of tinnitus, 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 “Tinnitus Research for
5 Military Health Improvement Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) Tinnitus, or the perception of sound where
9 no external source of such sound exists, is the most
10 prevalent disabling condition that affects members of

1 the Armed Forces, most notably those members who
2 have been exposed to blast injuries during combat,
3 or other high noise level situations.

4 (2) Tinnitus is the leading service-connected
5 disability for returning members of the Armed
6 Forces and the prevalence of tinnitus is continuing
7 to increase at alarming rates.

8 (3) An otologic, or ear, injury such as tinnitus
9 has been shown to decrease performance and situa-
10 tional awareness during combat, seriously compro-
11 mising the ability of a member of the Armed Forces
12 to hear and execute commands properly, thereby
13 jeopardizing not only the affected member but other
14 members as well.

15 (4) While certain types of sensory impairment
16 in combat or other military activities may be readily
17 apparent, otologic injuries such as tinnitus may not
18 be easily noticeable, which necessitates the need for
19 more rigorous screening for tinnitus before and after
20 deployment, and for additional research to distin-
21 guish tinnitus from other forms of brain injury in-
22 curred during combat.

23 (5) Medical evidence to date suggests a dem-
24 onstrated link between tinnitus and post-traumatic
25 stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, such that

1 improved understanding of treatment of tinnitus
2 may also directly advance research efforts to address
3 post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain
4 injury.

5 (6) Improving the treatment and prevention of
6 tinnitus will benefit all members of the Armed
7 Forces who are increasingly at risk of injury from
8 high-decibel equipment or explosive devices.

9 **SEC. 3. CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR THE STUDY OF**
10 **TINNITUS.**

11 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense
13 shall establish one or more Centers of Excellence (in
14 this section referred to as a “center”) for the study
15 of tinnitus.

16 (2) LOCATION.—The Secretary shall establish a
17 center at a military installation in the United States
18 where members of the Armed Forces perform activi-
19 ties involving high rates of sound, including artillery
20 instruction and other basic combat training related
21 activities.

22 (b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—A center shall have the re-
23 sponsibilities as follows:

24 (1) To study and enhance existing treatment
25 modalities for members of the Armed Forces with

1 tinnitus, including diagnosed cases of recurrent,
2 chronic, or severe tinnitus.

3 (2) To conduct basic and clinical research to
4 prevent, treat, and cure tinnitus, including studies
5 on the neurological changes in the brain associated
6 with tinnitus.

7 (3) To coordinate research activities with the
8 Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological
9 Health and Traumatic Brain Injury in order to es-
10 tablish a tinnitus data registry for members of the
11 Armed Forces affected with tinnitus and other neu-
12 rological conditions that will enhance scientific
13 progress toward improvements in treatment for
14 tinnitus and associated neurological combat related
15 conditions.

16 (c) REPORTS.—Not later than one year after the date
17 of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the
18 Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report
19 on the activities of the center.

20 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
21 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
22 \$7,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2011 through 2016.

1 **SEC. 4. AURAL SCREENINGS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED**
2 **FORCES.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (2) of section 1074f(b)
4 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at
5 the end the following new subparagraph:

6 “(D) An aural screening, including an assess-
7 ment of tinnitus.”.

8 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 1074f(b)(2) of title
9 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) of this
10 section, shall apply to members of the Armed Forces who
11 are deployed or return from deployment on or after the
12 date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of
13 this Act.

14 **SEC. 5. GRANT PROGRAM TO ENCOURAGE TINNITUS RE-**
15 **SEARCH.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the availability of ap-
17 propriations provided for such purpose, the Secretary of
18 Defense shall establish a program to award grants to insti-
19 tutions to assist such institutions in conducting research
20 on recurrent, chronic, or severe tinnitus and peripheral
21 neurological conditions, including research related to neu-
22 rology, pharmacology, audiology, otolaryngology, and
23 other disciplines that the Secretary determines appro-
24 priate according to newly discovered evidence-based find-
25 ings.

26 (b) ELIGIBILITY.—

1 (1) TEACHING PROGRAM.—An institution eligi-
2 ble to receive a grant under this section is—

3 (A) a hospital with a teaching program de-
4 scribed in section 1861(b)(6) of the Social Se-
5 curity Act (42 U.S.C. 1395x); or

6 (B) an educational institution with dem-
7 onstrated expertise in tinnitus research.

8 (2) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a
9 grant under this section, an institution shall submit
10 an application to the Secretary of Defense at such
11 time, in such manner, and containing such informa-
12 tion as the Secretary may require. The Secretary
13 shall ensure that such applications are peer-reviewed
14 by multidisciplinary tinnitus experts from both the
15 public and private sector.

16 (c) GRANT AMOUNT.—An institution awarded a
17 grant under this section may not receive more than
18 \$2,500,000 per fiscal year under this section.

19 (d) REPORTS.—Not later than December 31 of each
20 year a grant may be awarded under this section, the Sec-
21 retary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report on
22 the grant program, including a summary of the research
23 related to tinnitus conducted by each grant recipient.

1 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
2 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
3 \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2011 through 2016.

4 **SEC. 6. IMPROVING AURAL PROTECTION FOR MEMBERS OF**
5 **THE ARMED FORCES.**

6 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall ex-
7 amine methods to improve the aural protection for mem-
8 bers of the Armed Forces in combat.

9 (b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
10 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit
11 to Congress a report on the methods to improve aural pro-
12 tection examined under subsection (a).

13 **SEC. 7. EXECUTIVE AGENT FOR TINNITUS.**

14 (a) EXECUTIVE AGENT.—Not later than 90 days
15 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
16 of Defense shall designate a senior official of the Depart-
17 ment of Defense to act as the executive agent for tinnitus.

18 (b) ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND AUTHORI-
19 TIES.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
21 after the date of the enactment of this Act, and in
22 accordance with Directive 5101.1, the Secretary of
23 Defense shall prescribe the roles, responsibilities,
24 and authorities of the executive agent designated
25 under subsection (a).

1 (2) SPECIFICATION.—The roles and responsibil-
2 ities of the executive agent designated under sub-
3 section (a) shall include coordinating common func-
4 tions related to tinnitus among the military depart-
5 ments.

6 (c) SUPPORT.—In accordance with Directive 5101.1,
7 the Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the military de-
8 partments, Defense Agencies, and other components of the
9 Department of Defense provide the executive agent des-
10 ignated under subsection (a) with the appropriate support
11 and resources needed to perform the roles, responsibilities,
12 and authorities of the executive agent.

13 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

14 (1) The term “Directive 5101.1” means De-
15 partment of Defense Directive 5101.1, or any suc-
16 cessor directive relating to the responsibilities of an
17 executive agent of the Department of Defense.

18 (2) The term “executive agent” has the mean-
19 ing given the term “DoD Executive Agent” in Direc-
20 tive 5101.1.

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