

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1262

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a veterans conservation corps, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 27, 2013

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

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a veterans conservation corps, 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 Conservation
5 Corps Act of 2013”.

6 **SEC. 2. VETERANS CONSERVATION CORPS.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans
8 Affairs shall, in cooperation with the Attorney General,
9 the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce,
10 the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of the

1 Interior, and the Chief of Engineers, establish a veterans
 2 conservation corps to assist veterans in the transition from
 3 service in the Armed Forces to civilian life and to employ
 4 veterans—

5 (1) in conservation, resource management, and
 6 historic preservation projects on public lands and
 7 maintenance and improvement projects for ceme-
 8 teries under the jurisdiction of the National Ceme-
 9 tery Administration; and

10 (2) as firefighters, law enforcement officers,
 11 and disaster relief personnel.

12 (b) CONSERVATION, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, HIS-
 13 TORIC PRESERVATION, AND CEMETERY MAINTENANCE
 14 AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—As part of the veterans con-
 16 servation corps, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs,
 17 the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Com-
 18 merce, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Chief
 19 of Engineers shall—

20 (A) employ veterans to carry out projects
 21 described in subsection (a)(1); or

22 (B) award grants to, or enter into con-
 23 tracts with, State governments, local govern-
 24 ments, or nongovernmental entities to employ

1 veterans to carry out projects described in sub-
2 section (a)(1).

3 (2) PRIORITY.—In employing or awarding
4 grants or contracts to employ veterans under this
5 subsection, the Secretaries referred to in paragraph
6 (1) and the Chief of Engineers shall give priority to-
7 wards the employment of veterans who served on ac-
8 tive duty in the Armed Forces on or after September
9 11, 2001.

10 (3) COORDINATION.—The Secretary of Vet-
11 erans Affairs shall coordinate the activities of the
12 Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Com-
13 merce, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Chief
14 of Engineers to employ veterans as part of the vet-
15 erans conservation corps.

16 (4) OVERSIGHT OF PROJECTS.—The Secretaries
17 referred to in paragraph (1) and the Chief of Engi-
18 neers shall each provide oversight of the projects for
19 which they employ veterans under subparagraph (A)
20 of such paragraph or award grants or enter into
21 contracts under subparagraph (B) of such para-
22 graph.

23 (c) FIRST RESPONDERS.—

24 (1) FIREFIGHTERS.—As part of the veterans
25 conservation corps, the Secretary of Homeland Secu-

1 rity shall award grants under section 34 of the Fed-
2 eral Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15
3 U.S.C. 2229a) to hire veterans as firefighters.

4 (2) LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.—As part of
5 the veterans conservation corps, the Attorney Gen-
6 eral shall award grants under part Q of title I of the
7 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of
8 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3796dd et seq.) to hire veterans as
9 law enforcement officers.

10 (3) DISASTER RELIEF PERSONNEL.—As part of
11 the veterans conservation corps, the Secretary of
12 Homeland Security shall provide funds to increase
13 participation by veterans in the FEMA Corps pro-
14 gram, which is a partnership between the Corpora-
15 tion for National and Community Service and the
16 Federal Emergency Management Agency.

17 (4) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants or pro-
18 viding funds under this subsection to hire veterans,
19 the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attor-
20 ney General shall give priority to the hiring of vet-
21 erans who served on active duty in the Armed
22 Forces on or after September 11, 2001.

23 (d) ASSISTANCE.—

24 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans
25 Affairs may provide assistance to the Secretaries re-

ferred to in subsection (a), the Attorney General,
and the Chief of Engineers to carry out the veterans
conservation corps. Such assistance may take the
form of a transfer under paragraph (2).

(2) TRANSFERS.—Except as otherwise provided
in this subsection, of amounts appropriated or other-
wise made available to the Secretary of Veterans Af-
fairs to carry out this section, the Secretary of Vet-
erans Affairs may transfer such amounts as the Sec-
retary considers appropriate to carry out the vet-
erans conservation corps to the following:

(A) The Attorney General.

(B) The Secretary of Agriculture.

(C) The Secretary of Commerce.

(D) The Secretary of Homeland Security.

(E) The Secretary of the Interior.

(F) The Chief of Engineers.

(3) ASSISTANCE FOR CONSERVATION, RE-
SOURCE MANAGEMENT, HISTORIC PRESERVATION,
AND CEMETERY MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT
PROJECTS.—

(A) APPLICATION.—If a Secretary referred
to in subsection (b)(1) or the Chief of Engi-
neers seeks assistance under paragraph (1) to
employ a veteran to carry out a project under

1 subparagraph (A) of subsection (b)(1) or to
 2 award a grant or contract to carry out a project
 3 under subparagraph (B) of such subsection,
 4 such Secretary or the Chief of Engineers shall
 5 submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs an
 6 application therefor at such time, in such man-
 7 ner, and containing such information as the
 8 Secretary of Veterans Affairs may require.

9 (B) SELECTION.—The Secretary of Vet-
 10 erans Affairs shall, in consultation with the
 11 steering committee established under subpara-
 12 graph (C), award assistance under this para-
 13 graph in accordance with such criteria as the
 14 steering committee establishes.

15 (C) STEERING COMMITTEE.—

16 (i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of
 17 Veterans Affairs shall establish a steering
 18 committee—

19 (I) to establish selection criteria
 20 for the awarding of assistance under
 21 paragraph (1) to employ a veteran to
 22 carry out a project under subpara-
 23 graph (A) of subsection (b)(1) or to
 24 award a grant or contract to carry out

1 a project under subparagraph (B) of
 2 such subsection; and

3 (II) to provide the Secretary of
 4 Veterans Affairs with advice on
 5 awarding assistance under this sub-
 6 section with respect to projects de-
 7 scribed in subsection (a)(1) and car-
 8 rying out the requirements of the vet-
 9 erans conservation corps under sub-
 10 section (b).

11 (ii) COMPOSITION.—The steering com-
 12 mittee shall be composed of the following:

13 (I) The Secretary of Veterans Af-
 14 fairs.

15 (II) The Secretary of Agri-
 16 culture.

17 (III) The Secretary of Com-
 18 merce.

19 (IV) The Secretary of the Inte-
 20 rior.

21 (V) The Chief of Engineers.

22 (iii) CHAIRPERSON.—The chairperson
 23 of the steering committee shall be the Sec-
 24 retary of Veterans Affairs.

1 (iv) ADVISORY INPUT.—The Secretary
2 of Defense, the Secretary of Labor, and
3 the Chief Executive Officer of the Corpora-
4 tion for National and Community Service
5 may provide advice to the steering com-
6 mittee.

7 (4) ASSISTANCE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS.—Not
8 more than 10 percent of amounts appropriated or
9 otherwise made available to the Secretary of Vet-
10 erans Affairs to carry out this section may be trans-
11 ferred to the Attorney General and the Secretary of
12 Homeland Security to employ veterans under sub-
13 section (c).

14 (e) REPORTING FRAMEWORK.—The Secretary of Vet-
15 erans Affairs shall establish a reporting framework to reg-
16 ularly monitor and evaluate the veterans conservation
17 corps to ensure proper oversight and accountability of the
18 veterans conservation corps.

19 (f) OUTREACH.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
20 shall ensure that veterans employed under the veterans
21 conservation corps are aware of benefits and assistance
22 available to them under laws administered by the Sec-
23 retary of Veterans Affairs.

24 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is available without
2 further appropriation to the Secretary of Veterans
3 Affairs to carry out this section, \$600,000,000 for
4 the period of fiscal years 2014 through 2018.

5 (2) LIMITATION.—Of amounts appropriated or
6 otherwise made available to carry out this section,
7 not more than five percent may be spent to admin-
8 ister the veterans conservation corps.

9 (h) VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term
10 “veteran” has the meaning given the term in section 101
11 of title 38, United States Code.

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