

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4309

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve services for veterans residing in rural areas.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 10, 2005

Mr. WU introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve services for veterans residing in rural areas.

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 “Rural Veterans Serv-
5 ices Outreach and Training Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITION OF OUTREACH.**

7 Section 101 of title 38, United States Code, is
8 amended by adding at the end the following new para-
9 graph:

1 “(34) The term ‘outreach’ means the act or
2 process of reaching out in a systematic manner to
3 proactively provide information, services, and bene-
4 fits counseling to veterans, and to the spouses, chil-
5 dren, and parents of veterans, who may be eligible
6 to receive benefits under the laws administered by
7 the Secretary, and to ensure that such individuals
8 are fully informed about, and assisted in applying
9 for, any benefits and programs under such laws.”.

10 **SEC. 3. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS GRANT PRO-**
11 **GRAM FOR RURAL COUNTY VETERAN SERV-**
12 **ICE OFFICERS.**

13 (a) GRANTS.—Chapter 5 of title 38, United States
14 Code, is amended by inserting after section 531 the fol-
15 lowing new section:

16 **“§ 532. Grants to assist certain rural counties in em-**
17 **ploying county veteran service officers;**
18 **professional qualifications**

19 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to im-
20 prove outreach and assistance to veterans, and to the
21 spouses, children, and parents of veterans, who may be
22 eligible to receive veterans’ or veterans-related benefits
23 and who are residing in rural counties through the train-
24 ing of rural county veteran service officers.

1 “(b) GRANT PROGRAM.—The Secretary shall carry
2 out a program to make competitive grants in accordance
3 with this section to provide financial assistance to State
4 departments of veteran affairs for the purpose stated in
5 subsection (a).

6 “(c) AMOUNT OF GRANT.—The amount of a grant
7 under this section shall be determined by the Secretary,
8 but may not exceed \$1,000,000.

9 “(d) ELIGIBILITY.—For purposes of this section, a
10 State is eligible for a grant under this section if it can
11 demonstrate any of the following:

12 “(1) That it has at least one county, in which
13 veterans reside, that does not have a county veterans
14 service officer.

15 “(2) That it has at least one county, in which
16 veterans reside, that has a county veterans service
17 officer who performs county veterans service officer
18 functions on less than a full-time basis and that
19 county is able to demonstrate a need for additional
20 services by a county veterans service officer.

21 “(3) That it has at least one county, in which
22 not fewer than 1,000 veterans reside, that currently
23 has a full-time county veterans service officer, but
24 only if the county is able to demonstrate a need for

1 additional services by a county veterans service offi-
2 cer.

3 “(e) COMPETITION FOR GRANT.—An eligible State
4 seeking a grant under this section shall submit to the Sec-
5 retary an application for the grant. The application shall
6 be in such form and shall contain such information as the
7 Secretary may require, including information establishing
8 that the State is an eligible State under this section. From
9 the applications submitted the Secretary shall approve
10 those applications that the Secretary determines to be the
11 most promising in carrying out the purposes of the grant
12 program. Each State whose application is selected by the
13 Secretary to receive a grant under the grant program shall
14 receive funds in an amount determined by the Secretary
15 under subsection (c). In making such determination, the
16 Secretary shall take into consideration the amount of the
17 total appropriation for the grant program, the relative size
18 of the State’s veteran population, and the funding nec-
19 essary to improve training and outreach of county veteran
20 service officers in rural counties. Such funds shall go to
21 the State department of veterans’ affairs.

22 “(f) REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE RECEIPT OF FED-
23 ERAL FUNDS.—Each State receiving a grant under this
24 section shall—

1 “(1) provide to the Secretary information and
2 assurances that the funds received under the grant
3 program for the training of county veteran service
4 officers will go to assist counties in which not less
5 than 1,000 veterans reside, and which, in accordance
6 with standards and classification of the Census Bu-
7 reau, consists entirely of territory, population, and
8 housing units outside of territory classified by the
9 Census Bureau as an ‘urban area’;

10 “(2) provide an assurance that the State agency
11 shall match the Federal funds provided under this
12 section by providing at least 20 percent of the total
13 cost of the grant program; and

14 “(3) use funds received under this section only
15 to supplement the amount of funds that would, in
16 the absence of such Federal funds, be made avail-
17 able from non-Federal sources for the purposes of
18 this section, and not to supplant such funds.

19 “(g) COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER.—For
20 purposes of this section, a county veteran service officer
21 is an employee of a county (regardless of job title) whose
22 duties include providing to veterans residing in the county
23 advice and casework services related to benefits provided
24 under laws administered by the Secretary.

1 “(h) GRANT FREQUENCY.—Grants under this section
2 shall be made on an annual basis.”.

3 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
4 at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting
5 after the item relating to section 531 the following new
6 item:

“532. Grants to assist certain rural counties in employing county veteran service officers; professional qualifications.”.

