

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 716

To amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance services provided by vet centers, to clarify and improve the provision of bereavement counseling by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 6, 2005

Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, and Mr. CONRAD) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance services provided by vet centers, to clarify and improve the provision of bereavement counseling by the Department of Veterans Affairs, 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 “Vet Center Enhance-
5 ment Act of 2005”.

1 **SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF VET CEN-**
2 **TERS.**

3 (a) **ADDITIONAL OUTREACH WORKERS.**—The Sec-
4 retary of Veterans Affairs shall employ not more than 50
5 veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation
6 Iraqi Freedom for the purpose of providing outreach to
7 veterans on the availability of readjustment counseling
8 and related mental health services for veterans under sec-
9 tion 1712A of title 38, United States Code.

10 (b) **CONSTRUCTION WITH CURRENT OUTREACH**
11 **PROGRAM.**—The veterans employed under subsection (a)
12 are in addition to any veterans employed by the Secretary
13 for the purpose described in that subsection under the
14 February 2004 program of the Department of Veterans
15 Affairs to provide outreach described in that subsection.

16 (c) **ASSIGNMENT TO VET CENTERS.**—The Secretary
17 may assign any veteran employed under subsection (a) to
18 any vet center that the Secretary considers appropriate
19 in order to meet the purpose described in that subsection.

20 (d) **INAPPLICABILITY AND TERMINATION OF LIMITA-**
21 **TION ON DURATION OF EMPLOYMENT.**—Any limitation on
22 the duration of employment of veterans under the program
23 described in subsection (b) is hereby terminated, and shall
24 not apply to veterans employed under such program or
25 under this section.

1 (e) EMPLOYMENT STATUS.—Veterans employed
2 under subsection (a) shall be employed in career condi-
3 tional status, which is the employment status in which vet-
4 erans are employed under the program described in sub-
5 section (b).

6 (f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

7 (1) VET CENTER.—The term “vet center”
8 means a center for the provision of readjustment
9 counseling and related mental health services under
10 section 1712A of title 38, United States Code.

11 (2) VETERAN OF OPERATION ENDURING FREE-
12 DOM OR OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM.—The term
13 “veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom or Oper-
14 ation Iraqi Freedom” means any veteran who served
15 in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during
16 Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi
17 Freedom.

18 **SEC. 3. CLARIFICATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF BEREAVE-**
19 **MENT COUNSELING.**

20 (a) CLARIFICATION OF MEMBERS OF IMMEDIATE
21 FAMILY ELIGIBLE FOR COUNSELING.—Subsection (b) of
22 section 1783 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

23 (1) by inserting “(1)” before “The Secretary”;
24 and

1 (2) by adding at the end the following new
2 paragraph:

3 “(2) For purposes of this subsection, the members
4 of the immediate family of a member of the Armed Forces
5 described in paragraph (1) include the parents of such
6 member.”.

7 (b) PROVISION OF COUNSELING THROUGH VET CEN-
8 TERS.—Such section is further amended—

9 (1) by redesignating subsection (c) as sub-
10 section (d); and

11 (2) by inserting after subsection (b) the fol-
12 lowing new subsection (c):

13 “(c) PROVISION OF COUNSELING THROUGH VET
14 CENTERS.—Bereavement counseling may be provided
15 under this section through the facilities and personnel of
16 centers for the provision of readjustment counseling and
17 related mental health services under section 1712A of this
18 title.”.

19 **SEC. 4. FUNDING FOR VET CENTER PROGRAM.**

20 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Depart-
21 ment of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2006,
22 \$180,000,000 for the provision of readjustment counseling
23 and related mental health services through centers under
24 section 1712A of title 38, United States Code, including

- 1 for the discharge of the requirements of this Act (and the
- 2 amendments made by this Act).

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