



H.R. 5554 – JUSTIN BAILEY VETERANS SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT OF 2008

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 5554 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Michael Michaud (D-ME) on March 6, 2008. The House Committee on Veterans Affairs agreed to the bill, as amended, by voice vote on April 30, 2008.

H.R. 5554 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on May 20, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 5554 requires each Veterans Affairs medical center to provide a full range of substance abuse disorder care to veterans. Substance abuse disorder services that must be available include: 1) screening for substance use disorder in all settings, including primary care; 2) detoxification and stabilization services; 3) intensive outpatient care services; 4) relapse prevention services; 5) outpatient counseling services; 6) residential substance use disorder treatment; 7) pharmacological treatment to reduce cravings, and opioid substitution therapy; 8) coordination with groups providing peer to peer counseling; and 9) short-term, early interventions for substance use disorders, such as motivational counseling.

The bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide outreach to veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom to spread awareness of substance abuse disorder programs available through the VA.

VA resources are to be allocated to ensure their availability to all veterans requiring treatment for substance abuse. The VA is to submit budget documents to Congress that detail the care, treatment, and services provided by the VA for substance abuse disorders. The Committee on Care of Severely Chronically Mentally Ill Veterans is directed to assess quality of care available and identify any barriers that exist for veterans access to treatment and services. The Secretary is to report on all residential mental health care facilities run by the VA no later than six months after the enactment of H.R. 5554.

The legislation authorizes \$1.5 million for each of fiscal years 2010 and 2011 to establish and carry out a pilot program for an internet-based substance use disorder treatment for veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom not later than October 1, 2009.

H.R. 5554 is enacted as a tribute to Justin Bailey, who died in a VA facility while receiving care for post-traumatic stress disorder as well as for a substance abuse disorder. Mr. Bailey was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces serving Operation Iraqi Freedom.

BACKGROUND

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, the prevalence of alcohol and marijuana abuse among veterans is above that of the national average. In 2003, an estimated 3.5 percent of veterans used marijuana and 7.5 percent abused alcohol over the month previous to the study. In the same year, only 0.8 percent of veterans received specialty substance abuse treatment.

The VA administers Vet Centers across the U.S. to provide readjustment counseling and outreach services to all veterans who served in any combat zone. Services are also available for their family members for military related issues. These benefits are provided at no cost to the veteran or family.



COST

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that “implementing H.R. 5554 would cost about \$360 million over the 2009-2013 period.”

[Full CBO cost estimate for H.R. 5554](#)

STAFF CONTACT

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