

112TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1127

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish centers of excellence for rural health research, education, and clinical activities and to recognize the rural health resource centers in the Office of Rural Health, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 26, 2011

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 establish centers of excellence for rural health research, education, and clinical activities and to recognize the rural health resource centers in the Office of Rural Health, 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 Rural Health
5 Improvement Act of 2011”.

1 **SEC. 2. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR RURAL HEALTH RE-**
2 **SEARCH, EDUCATION, AND CLINICAL ACTIVI-**
3 **TIES.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 73 of
5 title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the
6 end the following new section:

7 **“SEC. 7330B. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FOR RURAL**
8 **HEALTH RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND CLIN-**
9 **ICAL ACTIVITIES.**

10 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTERS.—The Secretary
11 shall, through the Director of the Office of Rural Health,
12 establish and operate at least one and not more than five
13 centers of excellence for rural health research, education,
14 and clinical activities, which shall—

15 “(1) conduct research on the furnishing of
16 health services in rural areas;

17 “(2) develop specific models to be used by the
18 Department in furnishing health services to veterans
19 in rural areas;

20 “(3) provide education and training for health
21 care professionals of the Department on the fur-
22 nishing of health services to veterans in rural areas;
23 and

24 “(4) develop and implement innovative clinical
25 activities and systems of care for the Department

1 for the furnishing of health services to veterans in
2 rural areas.

3 “(b) USE OF RURAL HEALTH RESOURCE CEN-
4 TERS.—In selecting locations for the establishment of cen-
5 ters of excellence under subsection (a), the Secretary may
6 select a rural health resource center that meets the re-
7 quirements of subsection (a).

8 “(c) GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSION.—The Secretary shall
9 ensure that the centers established under this section are
10 located at health care facilities that are geographically dis-
11 persed throughout the United States.

12 “(d) FUNDING.—(1) There are authorized to be ap-
13 propriated to the Medical Care Account and the Medical
14 and Prosthetics Research Account of the Department of
15 Veterans Affairs such sums as may be necessary for the
16 support of the research and education activities of the cen-
17 ters operated under this section.

18 “(2) There shall be allocated to the centers operated
19 under this section, from amounts authorized to be appro-
20 priated to the Medical Care Account and the Medical and
21 Prosthetics Research Account by paragraph (1), such
22 amounts as the Under Secretary of Health considers ap-
23 propriate for such centers. Such amounts shall be allo-
24 cated through the Director of the Office of Rural Health.

1 “(3) Activities of clinical and scientific investigation
2 at each center operated under this section—

3 “(A) shall be eligible to compete for the award
4 of funding from funds appropriated for the Medical
5 and Prosthetics Research Account; and

6 “(B) shall receive priority in the award of fund-
7 ing from such account to the extent that funds are
8 awarded to projects for research in the care of rural
9 veterans.”.

10 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
11 at the beginning of chapter 73 of such title is amended
12 by inserting after the item relating to section 7330A the
13 following new item:

“7330B. Centers of excellence for rural health research, education, and clinical
activities.”.

14 (c) RECOGNITION OF RURAL HEALTH RESOURCE
15 CENTERS IN OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH.—Section 7308
16 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following
17 new subsection:

18 “(d) RURAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTERS.—(1)
19 There are in the Office veterans rural health resource cen-
20 ters that serve as satellite offices for the Office.

21 “(2) The veterans rural health resource centers have
22 purposes as follows:

1 “(A) To improve the understanding of the Of-
2 fice of the challenges faced by veterans living in
3 rural areas.

4 “(B) To identify disparities in the availability of
5 health care to veterans living in rural areas.

6 “(C) To formulate practices or programs to en-
7 hance the delivery of health care to veterans living
8 in rural areas.

9 “(D) To develop special practices and products
10 for the benefit of veterans living in rural areas and
11 for implementation of such practices and products in
12 the Department systemwide.”.

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