

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 5455

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program for the construction and renovation of committal shelters at State-owned veterans' cemeteries, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 9, 2024

Mr. MANCHIN 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 carry out a program for the construction and renovation of committal shelters at State-owned veterans' cemeteries, 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 “Hershel ‘Woody’ Wil-
5 liams State Committal Shelter Act of 2024”.

1 **SEC. 2. COMMITTAL STRUCTURES AT STATE-OWNED VET-**
2 **ERANS' CEMETERIES.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the availability of ap-
4 propriations, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry
5 out a program for the construction or renovation of com-
6 mittal shelters at State-owned veterans' cemeteries to en-
7 sure attendees of burial services at such cemeteries are
8 protected from inclement weather (in this section referred
9 to as the “program”).

10 (b) SOLICITATION OF APPLICATIONS.—Not later
11 than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act,
12 the Secretary shall solicit applications from States for par-
13 ticipation in the program.

14 (c) SELECTION OF CEMETERIES.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
16 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-
17 retary shall select, on a competitive basis, three
18 State-owned veterans' cemeteries for participation in
19 the program.

20 (2) CRITERIA.—

21 (A) IN GENERAL.—Each cemetery selected
22 by the Secretary for participation in the pro-
23 gram shall be located in an area with drastic
24 variation in annual temperature and weather
25 patterns.

1 (B) APPALACHIA.—One cemetery selected
2 by the Secretary for participation in the pro-
3 gram shall be located in a State in which each
4 county of that State is served by the Appa-
5 lachian Regional Commission.

6 (3) PRIORITY.—

7 (A) IN GENERAL.—In selecting cemeteries
8 for participation in the program, the Secretary
9 shall prioritize cemeteries based on relative
10 demonstrated need, as determined by the Sec-
11 retary.

12 (B) CONSIDERATIONS.—In making a de-
13 termination under subparagraph (A), the Sec-
14 retary may consider—

15 (i) the number of veterans' families
16 served by a cemetery; and

17 (ii) the relative severity of weather at
18 a cemetery.

19 (d) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS.—The Secretary
20 shall carry out the program by entering into a cooperative
21 agreement (as described in section 6305 of title 31, United
22 States Code) with each cemetery selected for participation
23 in the program.

24 (e) COMMITTAL SHELTERS.—At each cemetery se-
25 lected for participation in the program, the Secretary shall

1 construct one or more new committal shelters, or renovate
 2 one or more existing committal shelters, so that each such
 3 shelter—

4 (1) is fully enclosed; and

5 (2) has heating, ventilation, air conditioning,
 6 and restroom services necessary for hosting not
 7 more than 50 individuals.

8 (f) COST SHARE REQUIREMENT.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The share of the cost of the
 10 construction or renovation of a committal shelter
 11 under the program shall be as follows:

12 (A) 50 percent Federal funds, subject to
 13 paragraph (2).

14 (B) 50 percent funds provided by State or
 15 local governments, nonprofit organizations, or
 16 private entities.

17 (2) FEDERAL MAXIMUM.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—Each cemetery partici-
 19 pating in the program shall receive not more
 20 than \$2,000,000 in Federal funds through the
 21 program.

22 (B) TOTAL FEDERAL MAXIMUM.—The
 23 total Federal share of the cost of construction
 24 and renovation of all committal shelters under
 25 the program shall not exceed \$5,000,000.

1 (g) USE OF FUNDS.—Amounts obligated and ex-
2 pend by the Secretary under the program may be used
3 for any activities that support the construction or renova-
4 tion of committal shelters at cemeteries participating in
5 the program, including costs associated with compliance
6 with laws (including regulations).

7 (h) FUNDING.—

8 (1) DERIVATION OF FUNDS.—Amounts to carry
9 out the program, as provided in advance in appro-
10 priations Acts from amounts specifically appro-
11 priated to carry out the purposes of this Act, may
12 be derived from amounts appropriated to carry out
13 section 2408 of title 38, United States Code.

14 (2) MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP.—The Federal
15 Government shall not be required to provide any
16 amounts for the maintenance or upkeep of any com-
17 mittal shelter after the termination of the coopera-
18 tive agreement concerned.

19 (i) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall revise regu-
20 lations as necessary to carry out this section.

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