



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE

July 25, 2018

H.R. 6398

Department of Energy Veterans' Health Initiative Act

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
on July 18, 2018*

SUMMARY

H.R. 6398 would require \$79 million in appropriated funds to be used by the Department of Energy (DOE) to carry out a pilot program on big data analytics and for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and DOE to conduct collaborative research on veterans' healthcare issues. CBO estimates implementing H.R. 6398 would cost \$76 million over the 2019-2023 period, assuming the availability of those appropriated amounts.

Enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 6398 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2029.

H.R. 6398 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA).

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary effect of H.R. 6398 is shown in the following table. The costs of the legislation fall within budget functions 250 (general science, space, and technology) and 700 (veterans benefits and services).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars						2019- 2023
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION							
Department of Energy							
Estimated Authorization Level	0	26	26	0	0	0	52
Estimated Outlays	0	14	22	12	4	0	52
Department of Veterans Affairs							
Estimated Authorization Level	0	6	6	5	5	5	27
Estimated Outlays	0	4	5	5	5	5	24
Total							
Estimated Authorization Level	0	32	32	5	5	5	79
Estimated Outlays	0	18	27	17	9	5	76

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For this estimate, CBO assumes the legislation will be enacted near the end of 2018 and that the necessary amounts will be available each year as specified. Estimated outlays are based on historical spending patterns for the affected activities.

Section 6 of the bill states that no additional funds are authorized to be appropriated by H.R. 6398. In CBO’s view, however, when a law imposes a new requirement on an agency (such as preparing a plan or completing a study), complying with that new requirement would entail the use of resources, and the cost of carrying out that requirement would be the amount of resources used. Because the requirements in this bill would apply to future fiscal years, for which appropriations have not yet been determined—they could, in fact, influence the amount of budget authority available to the agency in the future. Even if future funding was not affected, the agency would have to spend appropriated resources on that new activity instead of spending them to carry out other responsibilities.

Department of Energy

Section 5 would authorize appropriations of \$52 million to be used over the 2019-2020 period for DOE to carry out a pilot program to advance the use of artificial intelligence for big data analytics. H.R. 6398 also would direct DOE to submit a report to the Congress evaluating the effectiveness of that pilot program. CBO estimates that implementing section 5 would cost \$52 million over the 2019-2023 period.

Department of Veterans Affairs

Section 4 would authorize appropriations of \$27 million to be used by VA and DOE to implement a collaborative research program to analyze large-scale health and genomic data over the 2019-2023 period. The bill does not specify the amount for each year, so CBO assumes that between \$5 million to \$6 million would be used each year. In 2017, VA initiated plans to partner with DOE to use the high-performance computing capabilities at DOE's national laboratories to identify health trends using genomic data from more than 600,000 veteran volunteers. VA spent \$6 million in 2017 for such efforts.

Under the bill, VA would reimburse DOE for research expenses associated with the program. The bill also would require DOE to submit a report to the Congress on those collaborative efforts. CBO estimates that implementing section 4 would cost \$24 million over the 2019-2023 period.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS: None.

INCREASE IN LONG-TERM DIRECT SPENDING AND DEFICITS

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 6398 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2029.

MANDATES

H.R. 6398 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA.

ESTIMATE PREPARED BY

Federal Costs:

Janani Shankaran (Department of Energy)

Ann Futrell (Department of Veterans Affairs)

Mandates: Jon Sperl

ESTIMATE REVIEWED BY

Kim P. Cawley

Chief, Natural and Physical Resources Cost Estimates Unit

Sarah Jennings

Chief, Defense, International Affairs & Veterans Affairs Cost Estimates Unit

H. Samuel Papenfuss

Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis