CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE

May 9, 2017

H.R. 1677
Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2017

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on May 3, 2017

H.R. 1677 would require the Departments of State and the Treasury to impose sanctions on people and entities responsible for the security and humanitarian crisis in Syria or persons who engage in certain transactions with the government of Syria; that requirement would expire on December 31, 2021. The bill also would authorize the Department of State to assist entities that are investigating war crimes or crimes against humanity in Syria. Finally, the legislation would require briefings and reports to the Congress on the implementation of the act, ongoing assistance programs for the Syrian people, and the feasibility of various options to protect civilians in Syria.

Based on an analysis of information from the Department of State, CBO expects the department would require three additional staff at an annual cost of about $200,000 per person to implement the act's sanctions and reporting provisions. CBO further estimates that other administrative costs to the Department of the Treasury would total less than $500,000 over the next five years. The Department of State is currently providing assistance to entities that are committed to investigating and preserving evidence of human right violations in Syria. While it is possible that the department would increase such assistance under the bill, CBO has no basis for estimating such additional amounts. In total, and incorporating the effects of inflation, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1677 would cost $3 million over the 2018-2022 period; such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

Enacting H.R. 1677 would increase the number of people who would be denied visas by the Secretary of State and would be subject to civil or criminal penalties. Most visa fees are retained by the Department of State and spent without further appropriation, but some fees are deposited in the Treasury as revenues. Penalties also are recorded as revenues and a portion of those penalties can be spent without further appropriation. Pay-as-you-go procedures apply to this legislation because enacting it would affect direct spending and revenues. However, CBO estimates that implementing those sanction provisions would affect very few additional people and thus have insignificant effects on both revenues and direct spending.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 1677 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2028.

H.R. 1677 contains no intergovernmental mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The bill would expand sanctions on individuals and entities that provide support to the Syrian government. The expansion of sanctions would impose private-sector mandates, as defined in UMRA, on U.S. entities engaging in transactions that would be prohibited by the bill. In addition, individuals in the United States who engage in activities prohibited by the bill would have their visas revoked. The cost of the mandates would be any forgone income directly related to the newly prohibited actions. Because of the broad scope of existing U.S. sanctions involving Syria, CBO expects the number of entities and individuals in the United States affected by the legislation would be small. Further, CBO expects that the loss of income from the restrictions in the bill would be relatively low. Therefore, CBO estimates that the aggregate cost of the mandates would fall below the annual threshold established in UMRA for private-sector mandates ($156 million in 2017, adjusted annually for inflation).

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Sunita D'Monte (for federal costs) and Logan Smith (for private-sector mandates). The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.