

H.R. 1812, Vet Center Eligibility Expansion Act

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on May 8, 2019

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2019	2019-2024	2019-2029
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Deficit Effect	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	0	55	n.e.
Pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	No	Mandate Effects	
Increases on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2030?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No
n.e. = not estimated.			

H.R. 1812 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide mental health counseling at Vet Centers for the following individuals:

- Veterans or members of the armed forces (including reservists) who respond to national emergencies or disasters declared by the President;
- Members of the National Guard who respond to disasters or civil disorders in a state; or
- Members of the Coast Guard who participate in drug interdiction operations.

Vet Centers are facilities where VA provides social and psychological counseling to help veterans and service members cope with the stress of military service and the difficulties of adjusting to civilian life after that service. VA provides that counseling to individuals who served on active duty in combat and in several other circumstances. In 2018, VA spent an average of \$1,900 per patient to provide such counseling to 134,000 veterans and active-duty service members at 300 Vet Centers nationwide. On the basis of information from VA and the Department of Defense, CBO estimates that roughly 5,000 individuals would receive counseling each year under the bill. Thus, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1812 would cost \$55 million over the 2020-2024 period; subject to the availability of appropriated funds (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Estimated Increases in Spending Subject to Appropriation Under H.R. 1812

	By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars						2019-2024
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Estimated Authorization	0	11	11	11	11	12	56
Estimated Outlays	0	10	11	11	11	12	55

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Ann E. Futrell. The estimate was reviewed by Theresa Gullo, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.