

**H.R. 5639, Chuck Osier Burial Benefits Act**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on July 30, 2020

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2020	2020-2025	2020-2030
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	43	76
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	43	76
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	0	18	30
Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	Yes	<b>Mandate Effects</b>	
Increases on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2031?	< \$5 billion	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No

H.R. 5639 would create a new benefit for the families of deceased veterans whose remains are not placed in a cemetery. The bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide an urn or memorial plaque upon request.

### Direct Spending

Under current law, burial benefits, including the costs of headstones or grave markers for veterans who are interred in a cemetery, are paid by VA from mandatory appropriations. The department does not provide headstones, markers, or urns for veterans who are not interred in cemeteries. H.R. 5639 would require VA to provide an urn or memorial plaque for those veterans upon the request of their families. Veterans who served on or after April 6, 1917, and who otherwise were eligible for burial would be eligible for the new benefit.

On the basis of information from VA about the number of headstones and markers provided annually, as well as data on burial and cremation trends, CBO estimates that in 2021 about 45,000 eligible families would request an urn or plaque under the bill. Under current law, CBO expects that those families would forgo requesting a headstone or grave marker because they would either retain the remains or scatter them. CBO estimates that 22,500 families would choose an urn and an equal number would choose a plaque. Because the percentage of people choosing cremation is expected to increase, CBO estimates that the number of urns and plaques also would rise—to 28,000 each by 2030. Under the bill, the families of some veterans who will have died before the bill is enacted could also request

urns or plaques. Using information from VA and data on trends in burials and cremations, CBO estimates 60,000 families would request urns, and 160,000 would request plaques over the 2021-2025 period for veterans who die before the date of enactment.

Over the 2020-2030 period, CBO estimates, 310,000 urns would be provided at an average cost of \$171 each, and 415,000 plaques would be provided at an average cost of \$57 each. In total, those urns and plaques would cost \$76 million, CBO estimates (see Table 1).

**Table 1.  
Estimated Budgetary Effects of H.R. 5639**

	By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars											2020-2025	2020-2030
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030		
<b>Increases in Direct Spending</b>													
Estimated Budget Authority	0	6	10	9	9	9	5	7	7	7	7	43	76
Estimated Outlays	0	6	10	9	9	9	5	7	7	7	7	43	76
<b>Increases in Spending Subject to Appropriation</b>													
Estimated Authorization	0	2	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	3	3	18	30
Estimated Outlays	0	2	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	3	3	18	30

### Spending Subject to Appropriation

CBO estimates that VA would need additional resources to meet the bill’s requirements and still maintain current levels of service. Using information from VA, CBO estimates that the workload of VA’s burial claims processors would increase by 20 full-time-equivalent positions in 2021 and by an average of 25 such positions each year over the 2020-2030 period. In addition, CBO expects, VA would need additional computers and other resources. In total, CBO estimates, the costs for personnel and other resources would total \$18 million over the 2020-2025 period and \$30 million over the 2020-2030 period.

### Uncertainty

CBO’s estimate of the bill’s costs is subject to uncertainty about the number of families who would request urns and plaques. If more or fewer requests were made than CBO expects, costs could be higher or lower than CBO’s estimates.

### Estimate Prepared By

Logan Smith



## **Estimate Reviewed By**

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Director of Budget Analysis



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE  
U.S. Congress  
Washington, DC 20515

*Phillip L. Swagel, Director*

August 27, 2020

Honorable Mark Takano  
Chairman  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 5639, the Chuck Osier Burial Benefits Act.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Logan Smith, who can be reached at 226-2840.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phillip L. Swagel".

Phillip L. Swagel

Enclosure

cc: Honorable Phil Roe, M.D.  
Ranking Member