

## H.R. 6647, To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements relating to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment furnished through the Veterans Community Care program, and for other purposes

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on July 19, 2022

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2022	2022-2027	2022-2032
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	9	31
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	9	31
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	0	23	60
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 2033?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No

Under current law, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reimburses veterans who receive emergency treatment from a non-department provider if that veteran received medical care and services funded by VA during the preceding 24-month period. H.R. 6647 would require VA to reimburse veterans who receive emergency treatment from a non-department provider when such treatment was given within the 60-day period after the veteran enrolled in the VA health care system, regardless of whether the veteran has been previously treated by VA. That requirement would take effect one year after enactment.

Using information from VA, CBO estimates that an additional 2,900 veterans would become newly eligible and seek reimbursement for one emergency visit to a non-VA facility each year. At an average annual rate of \$3,300 for each visit, CBO estimates that expanding eligibility for reimbursement would cost \$89 million over the 2022-2032 period.

CBO expects that the department would need additional information technology resources to develop and maintain a system to account for the bill's new authority. Based on costs for similar requirements, CBO estimates that the additional IT and personnel resources would cost \$2 million over the 2022-2032 period.

In total, implementing H.R. 6647 would cost \$91 million over the 2023-2032 period.

Some of the beneficiaries receiving reimbursement for emergency treatment in H.R. 6647 would be veterans with exposures to environmental hazards, and CBO expects that some of the costs of implementing the bill would be paid from the new Toxic Exposure Fund (TEF) established by Public Law 117-168, the Honoring our PACT Act. The TEF is a mandatory appropriation that VA will use to pay for health care, disability claims processing, medical research, and IT modernization that benefit veterans who were exposed to environmental hazards.

Additional spending from the TEF would occur if legislation increases the costs of similar activities that benefit veterans with such exposure. CBO estimates that 21 percent of such additional costs would be paid from the fund in 2023, growing to 42 percent in 2032 as costs for those activities increase over time. Those percentages are based on the amount of formerly discretionary appropriations that CBO estimated will be provided through the new mandatory appropriation as specified in the Honoring our PACT Act. CBO estimates that over the 2022-2032 period, implementing the bill would increase spending subject to appropriation by \$60 million and direct spending by \$31 million.

The costs of the legislation, detailed in Table 1, fall within budget function 700 (veterans benefits and services).

<b>Table 1. Estimated Budgetary Effects of H.R. 6647</b>													
<b>By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars</b>												2022-2027	2022-2032
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032		
<b>Increases in Spending Subject to Appropriation</b>													
Estimated Authorization	0	1	5	5	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	23	60
Estimated Outlays	0	1	5	5	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	23	60
<b>Increases in Direct Spending</b>													
Estimated Budget Authority	0	0	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	6	9	31
Estimated Outlays	0	0	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	6	9	31

The Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 establishes budget-reporting and enforcement procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or revenues. The net changes in outlays that are subject to those pay-as-you-go procedures are shown in Table 1.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Etaf Khan. The estimate was reviewed by Leo Lex, Deputy Director of Budget Analysis.