

H.R. 2521, Delivering Optimally Urgent Labor Access for Veterans Affairs Act of 2021

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on September 21, 2022

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2023	2023-2027	2023-2032
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	12	18
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	12	18
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	1	32	42
Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	Yes	Mandate Effects	
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

H.R. 2521 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide doula services to veterans. A doula provides physical assistance and emotional support to pregnant women before, during, and after childbirth. Under the five-year pilot program authorized by the bill, eligible veterans would receive up to 10 sessions of care from a doula. The services would be provided in six of the department's health care regions, and VA would pay up to \$3,500 for doula services for each veteran who chooses to receive that care. Using information about the number of deliveries for which VA pays, CBO expects that an average of about 3,300 veterans annually would use up to 10 sessions of doula services. On the basis of data about the costs of doula services, CBO estimates that VA would pay an average of \$2,200 per veteran. In total, providing doula services would cost \$37 million over the 2023-2032 period.

The bill also would require the Office of Women's Health to establish a new doula coordinator position to oversee payments and patient care at each participating medical facility. CBO expects that VA would start recruiting in 2023 and hire coordinators for all 70 facilities by 2024. At an average annual rate of \$55,000 per employee, CBO estimates that the cost of those coordinators would total \$23 million over the 2023-2032 period.

Finally, the bill would require VA to report to the Congress annually on the progress of the program and provide recommendations on whether to continue or expand the program upon



its conclusion. Based on information about similar reports, CBO estimates satisfying that requirement would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2023-2032 period.

In total, CBO estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$60 million over the 2023-2032 period.

Some of the veterans receiving doula services in H.R. 2521 would be veterans who have been exposed to environmental hazards. 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.

Given the additional spending from the TEF, CBO estimates that over the 2023-2032 period, implementing the bill would increase spending subject to appropriation by \$42 million and direct spending by \$18 million.

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

Table 1. Estimated Budgetary Effects of H.R. 2521												
By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars											2023-2027	2023-2032
2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032			
Increases in Spending Subject to Appropriation												
Estimated Budget Authority	1	7	8	8	8	9	1	0	0	0	32	42
Estimated Outlays	1	7	8	8	8	9	1	0	0	0	32	42
Increases in Direct Spending												
[Estimated] Authorization	0	2	3	3	4	5	1	0	0	0	12	18
Estimated Outlays	1	2	3	3	4	5	1	0	0	0	12	18



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.