

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 1711

To establish a commission to evaluate the programs of the Federal Government that assist members of the Armed Forces and veterans in readjusting to civilian life, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 29, 1996

Mr. DOLE introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To establish a commission to evaluate the programs of the Federal Government that assist members of the Armed Forces and veterans in readjusting to civilian life, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.**

4 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established a com-
5 mission to be known as the Commission on Service Mem-
6 bers and Veterans Transition Assistance (hereafter in this
7 Act referred to as the “Commission”).

8 (b) MEMBERSHIP.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall be
2 composed of 12 members appointed from among pri-
3 vate United States citizens with appropriate and di-
4 verse veterans, military, organizational, and manage-
5 ment experiences and historical perspectives, of
6 whom—

7 (A) four shall be appointed by the Chair-
8 man of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of
9 the Senate, in consultation with the Ranking
10 Member of that committee;

11 (B) four shall be appointed by the Chair-
12 man of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of
13 the House of Representatives, in consultation
14 with the Ranking Member of that committee;

15 (C) two shall be appointed by the Chair-
16 man of the Committee on Armed Services of
17 the Senate, in consultation with the Ranking
18 Member of that committee; and

19 (D) two shall be appointed by the Chair-
20 man of the Committee on National Security of
21 the House of Representatives, in consultation
22 with the Ranking Member of that committee.

23 (2) VSO MEMBERS.—One member of the Com-
24 mission appointed under each of subparagraphs (A)

1 and (B) of paragraph (1) shall be a representative
2 of a veterans service organization.

3 (3) DATE.—The appointments of the members
4 of the Commission shall be made not later than 45
5 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

6 (c) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—Mem-
7 bers shall be appointed for the life of the Commission. Any
8 vacancy in the Commission shall not affect its powers, but
9 shall be filled in the same manner as the original appoint-
10 ment.

11 (d) INITIAL MEETING.—Not later than 30 days after
12 the date on which all members of the Commission have
13 been appointed, the Commission shall hold its first meet-
14 ing.

15 (e) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the
16 Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser num-
17 ber may hold hearings.

18 (f) CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN.—The Commis-
19 sion shall select a Chairman and Vice Chairman from
20 among its members.

21 (g) MEETINGS.—The Commission shall meet at the
22 call of the Chairman.

23 (h) PANELS.—The Commission may establish panels
24 composed of less than the full membership of the Commis-
25 sion for the purpose of carrying out the Commission's du-

1 ties under this Act. The actions of such panels shall be
2 subject to the review and control of the Commission. Any
3 findings and determinations made by such a panel shall
4 not be considered the findings and determinations of the
5 Commission unless approved by the Commission.

6 (i) **AUTHORITY OF INDIVIDUALS TO ACT FOR COM-**
7 **MISSION.**—Any member or agent of the Commission may,
8 if authorized by the Commission, take any action which
9 the Commission is authorized to take under this Act.

10 **SEC. 2. DUTIES OF COMMISSION.**

11 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Commission shall—

12 (1) review the efficacy and appropriateness of
13 veterans transition and assistance programs in pro-
14 viding assistance to members of the Armed Forces
15 in making the transition and adjustment to civilian
16 life upon their separation from the Armed Forces
17 and in providing assistance to veterans in adjusting
18 to civilian life;

19 (2) evaluate proposals for improving such pro-
20 grams, including proposals to consolidate, stream-
21 line, and enhance the provision of such assistance
22 and proposals for alternative means of providing
23 such assistance; and

24 (3) make recommendations to Congress regard-
25 ing means of ensuring the continuing utility of such

1 programs and assistance and of otherwise improving
2 such programs and the provision of such assistance.

3 (b) REVIEW OF PROGRAMS TO ASSIST MEMBERS OF
4 THE ARMED FORCES AT SEPARATION.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—While carrying out the gen-
6 eral duties specified in subsection (a), the members
7 of the Commission appointed under subparagraphs
8 (C) and (D) of section 1(b)(1) shall review primarily
9 programs intended to assist members of the Armed
10 Forces at the time of their separation from service
11 in the Armed Forces, including programs designed
12 to assist families of such members in preparing for
13 the transition of such members from military life to
14 civilian life and to facilitate that transition.

15 (2) SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out
16 the review, such members of the Commission shall
17 determine—

18 (A) the adequacy of the programs referred
19 to in paragraph (1) for their purposes;

20 (B) the adequacy of the support of the
21 Armed Forces for such programs;

22 (C) the effect, if any, of the existence of
23 such programs on combat readiness;

1 (D) the extent to which such programs
2 provide members of the Armed Forces with job-
3 search skills;

4 (E) the extent to which such programs
5 prepare such members for employment in the
6 private sector and in the public sector;

7 (F) the effectiveness of such programs in
8 assisting such members in finding employment
9 in the public sector; and

10 (G) the means by which such programs
11 could be improved in order to assist such mem-
12 bers in securing meaningful employment in the
13 private sector upon their separation from serv-
14 ice.

15 (c) REVIEW OF PROGRAMS TO ASSIST VETERANS.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—While carrying out the gen-
17 eral duties specified in subsection (a), the members
18 of the Commission appointed under subparagraphs
19 (A) and (B) of section 1(b)(1) shall review primarily
20 the adequacy of programs intended to assist veter-
21 ans (including disabled veterans, homeless veterans,
22 and economically disadvantaged veterans), including
23 the programs referred to in paragraph (2).

24 (2) COVERED PROGRAMS.—The programs re-
25 ferred to in paragraph (1) are the following:

1 (A) Educational assistance programs.

2 (B) Job counseling, job training, and job
3 placement services programs.

4 (C) Rehabilitation and training programs.

5 (D) Housing loan programs.

6 (E) Small business loan and small business
7 assistance programs.

8 (F) Employment and employment training
9 programs for employment in the public sector
10 and the private sector.

11 (G) Federal Government personnel policies
12 (including veterans' preference policies) and the
13 enforcement of such policies.

14 (H) Programs that prepare the families of
15 veterans for their transition from military life
16 to civilian life and facilitate that transition.

17 (d) REPORTS.—

18 (1) IMPLEMENTING PLAN.—Not later than 90
19 days after the date on which all members of the
20 Commission have been appointed, the Commission
21 shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs
22 and Armed Services of the Senate and the Commit-
23 tees on Veterans' Affairs and National Security of
24 the House of Representatives a report setting forth
25 a plan for the work of the Commission. The Com-

1 mission shall develop the plan in consultation with
2 the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Veterans
3 Affairs, and the heads of other appropriate depart-
4 ments and agencies of the Federal Government.

5 (2) FINAL REPORT.—

6 (A) REQUIREMENT.—Not later than one
7 year after the date of the first meeting of the
8 Commission, the Commission shall submit to
9 the committees referred to in paragraph (1),
10 and to the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary
11 of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Labor,
12 and the Secretary of Education, a report set-
13 ting forth the activities, findings, and rec-
14 ommendations of the Commission, including
15 any recommendations for legislative action and
16 administrative action as the Commission consid-
17 ers appropriate.

18 (B) EXECUTIVE COMMENT.—Not later
19 than 90 days after receiving the report referred
20 to in subparagraph (A), the Secretary of De-
21 fense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
22 shall jointly submit to Congress a report setting
23 forth the comments of such Secretaries with re-
24 spect to the report.

1 **SEC. 3. POWERS OF COMMISSION.**

2 (a) HEARINGS.—The Commission may hold such
3 hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such
4 testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission
5 considers advisable to carry out the purposes of this Act.

6 (b) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—The
7 Commission may secure directly from the Department of
8 Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and any
9 other department or agency of the Federal Government
10 such information as the Commission considers necessary
11 to carry out its duties under this Act. Upon request of
12 the Chairman of the Commission, the head of such depart-
13 ment or agency shall furnish such information expedi-
14 tiously to the Commission.

15 **SEC. 4. MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS.**

16 (a) POSTAL SERVICES.—The Commission may use
17 the United States mails in the same manner and under
18 the same conditions as other departments and agencies of
19 the Federal Government.

20 (b) GIFTS.—The Commission may accept, use and
21 dispose of gifts or donations of services or property.

22 (c) MISCELLANEOUS ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.—
23 The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans
24 Affairs shall, upon the request of the Chairman of the
25 Commission, furnish the Commission, on a reimbursable

1 basis, any administrative and support services as the Com-
2 mission may require.

3 **SEC. 5. COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.**

4 (a) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—Each member of
5 the Commission who is not an officer or employee of the
6 Federal Government shall be compensated at a rate equal
7 to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay pre-
8 scribed for level IV of the Executive Schedule under sec-
9 tion 5315 of title 5, United States Code, for each day (in-
10 cluding travel time) during which such member is engaged
11 in performing the duties of the Commission. All members
12 of the Commission who are officers or employees of the
13 United States shall serve without compensation in addi-
14 tion to that received for their services as officers or em-
15 ployees of the United States.

16 (b) TRAVEL AND TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

17 (1) TRAVEL.—Members and personnel of the
18 Commission may travel on military aircraft, military
19 vehicles, or other military conveyances when travel is
20 necessary in the performance of a responsibility of
21 the Commission except when the cost of commercial
22 transportation is less expensive.

23 (2) EXPENSES.—The members of the Commis-
24 sion shall be allowed travel expenses, including per
25 diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for

1 employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter
2 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from
3 their homes or regular places of business in the per-
4 formance of services for the Commission.

5 (c) STAFF.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Chairman of the Com-
7 mission may, without regard to civil service laws and
8 regulations, appoint and terminate an executive di-
9 rector and such other additional personnel as may be
10 necessary to enable the Commission to perform its
11 duties. In appointing an individual as executive di-
12 rector, the Chairman shall, to the maximum extent
13 practicable, attempt to appoint an individual who is
14 a veteran. The employment of an executive director
15 shall be subject to confirmation by the Commission.

16 (2) COMPENSATION.—The Chairman of the
17 Commission may fix the compensation of the execu-
18 tive director and other personnel without regard to
19 the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of
20 chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating
21 to classification of positions and General Schedule
22 pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the execu-
23 tive director and other personnel may not exceed the
24 rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule
25 under section 5316 of such title.

1 (d) **DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.**—Upon
2 request of the Chairman of the Commission, the head of
3 any department or agency of the Federal Government may
4 detail, on a nonreimbursable basis, any personnel of the
5 department or agency to the Commission to assist the
6 Commission in carrying out its duties.

7 (e) **PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMIT-**
8 **TENT SERVICES.**—The Chairman of the Commission may
9 procure temporary and intermittent services under section
10 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individ-
11 uals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual
12 rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive
13 Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

14 **SEC. 6. TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.**

15 The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the
16 date on which the Commission submits its report under
17 section 2(d)(2).

18 **SEC. 7. DEFINITIONS.**

19 For the purposes of this Act—

20 (1) The term “veterans transition and assist-
21 ance program” means any program of the Federal
22 Government, including the Department of Defense,
23 the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department
24 of Labor, and the Department of Education, the
25 purpose of which is—

1 (A) to assist, by rehabilitation or other
2 means, members of the Armed Forces in read-
3 justing or otherwise making the transition to ci-
4 vilian life upon their separation from service in
5 the Armed Forces; or

6 (B) to assist veterans in civilian life.

7 (2) The term “members of the Armed Forces”
8 includes individuals serving in the reserve compo-
9 nents of the Armed Forces.

10 (3) The term “veteran” has the meaning given
11 such term in section 101(2) of title 38, United
12 States Code.

13 (4) The term “veterans service organization”
14 means any organization covered by section 5902(a)
15 of title 38, United States Code.

16 **SEC. 8. FUNDING.**

17 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Defense shall,
18 upon the request of the Chairman of the Commission,
19 make available to the Commission such amounts as the
20 Commission may require to carry out its duties under this
21 Act. The Secretary shall make such amounts available
22 from amounts appropriated for the Department of De-
23 fense.

24 (b) **AVAILABILITY.**—Any sums made available to the
25 Commission under subsection (a) shall remain available,

- 1 without fiscal year limitation, until the termination of the
- 2 Commission.

