



## CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

August 2, 2016

### **H.R. 3471** **Veterans Mobility Safety Act of 2016**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
on May 18, 2016*

H.R. 3471 would modify a program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that assists eligible veterans with purchasing automobiles and having those vehicles adapted to accommodate the veterans' disabilities. The bill also would authorize VA to employ hearing aid specialists and would require VA to prepare an annual report documenting the access of veterans to hearing health services sponsored by VA. In total, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 3471 would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2017-2021 period; that spending would be subject to appropriation of the necessary amounts. Enacting H.R. 3471 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

Section 2 would require VA to ensure that eligible veterans have the opportunity to choose a certified, licensed provider for purchasing an automobile or installing adaptive equipment. On the basis of information from VA about current practice related to personal selections for automobiles and adaptive equipment, CBO believes that section 2 would codify current practice and, therefore, have no budgetary effect.

Section 3 would require VA to develop a comprehensive policy regarding quality standards for providers who make modifications to vehicles under the adaptive equipment program for automobiles. Section 3 also would require VA to provide biennial reports to the Congress on the implementation of that policy. CBO estimates that implementing section 3 would increase costs by less than \$500,000 over the 2017-2021 period.

Section 4 would specifically authorize VA to hire licensed hearing aid specialists and would require VA to provide veterans access to the full range of audiology services at its medical facilities. VA currently employs about 320 audiology health technicians (also known as audiology assistants). Some of those technicians are already licensed as hearing aid specialists based on their education and experience; the remainder could potentially qualify on the basis of their experience. CBO expects that, rather than hiring licensed hearing aid specialists, VA would allow the existing audiology health technicians who are not licensed to remain employed with the agency as technicians until they meet the requirements to be a hearing aid specialist. VA also employs 1,100 audiologists and offers

their services at 400 medical facilities. On that basis, we do not anticipate that VA would hire additional audiologists under this proposal.

Section 4 also would require VA to submit annual reports detailing VA's activities in providing hearing health services at VA medical facilities and through contracting with private-sector facilities. CBO estimates that preparing those reports would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2017-2021 period.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 3471 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2027.

H.R. 3471 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Dwayne M. Wright. The estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.