

H.R. 5607, Justice for ALS Veterans Act of 2021

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on November 4, 2021

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2022	2022-2026	2022-2031
Direct Spending (Outlays)	*	8	36
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	*	8	36
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	*	*	not estimated
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 2032?	< \$5 billion	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No
* = between zero and \$500,000.			

Under current law, surviving spouses of veterans who die of a service-related injury or illness may receive monthly payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) under the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation program (DIC). Generally, for a surviving spouse to receive DIC payments, the veteran must have died from a service-connected disability or be rated as totally disabled by VA for at least ten years prior to death. If the veteran was rated as totally disabled for at least eight full years and the surviving spouse was married to the veteran for those same eight years, the spouse is eligible to receive a higher DIC benefit.

H.R. 5607 would require VA to pay that same higher benefit to surviving spouses of veterans who die from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), regardless of how long the veteran had the disease prior to death if the spouse was married to the veteran for at least eight years prior to the veteran's death. Survivors of veterans who die from ALS after October 1, 2021, would be eligible for that enhanced benefit.

Using information from VA about the number of DIC recipients who were married to veterans with ALS for at least eight years, but whose veteran spouse did not live eight years after the ALS diagnosis, CBO estimates that about 150 spouses would receive higher payments in 2022 as a result of H.R. 5607. After accounting for the projected growth in the number of DIC beneficiaries over the next ten years and adjusting for mortality, about 1,650



spouses would receive additional payments by 2031. VA would make 8,700 annual equivalent payments averaging \$4,075 per year over the 2022-2031 period. In total, additional DIC payments would cost \$36 million, CBO estimates (see Table 1).

Using information from VA on the administrative cost of paying more survivors the additional amounts, CBO estimates any costs for VA to implement the bill would be insignificant. Those costs would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

**Table 1.
Estimated Budgetary Effects of H.R. 5607**

	By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars										2022-2026	2022-2031
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031		
	Increases in Direct Spending											
Estimated Budget Authority	*	1	2	2	3	4	5	6	6	7	8	36
Estimated Outlays	*	1	2	2	3	4	5	6	6	7	8	36

* = between zero and \$500,000.

a. In addition to the amounts shown here, implementing the bill would increase spending subject to appropriation by less than \$500,000 over the 2022-2026 period

Uncertainty

CBO's estimate of the bill's costs is subject to uncertainty about the number of survivors who would be eligible for additional DIC payments in each year. If more or fewer survivors become eligible than CBO expects, costs could be higher or lower than CBO's estimates.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Logan Smith. The estimate was reviewed by Leo Lex, Deputy Director of Budget.