

H.R. 5529, Veterans Justice Outreach Improvement Act

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)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	*	*	not estimated
Statutory pay-as-you-go procedures apply?	No	Mandate Effects	
Increases on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2032?	No	Contains intergovernmental mandate?	No
		Contains private-sector mandate?	No
* = between zero and \$500,000.			

H.R. 5529 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to increase awareness of its Veterans Justice Outreach Program (VJO) among veterans who have become involved with or processed through the criminal justice system, veterans service organizations, and law enforcement, court, and correctional officials. The program's purpose is to support veterans who have been arrested or jailed and may need services for mental health conditions, other physical health conditions, or homelessness. The program relies on VJO specialists who work with jails and courts to support the needs of arrested or incarcerated veterans. The bill would require VA to increase the number of VJO specialists in its medical centers and to support veterans in rural, remote, or underserved areas. The bill also would require VA to develop performance goals for VJO specialists and to provide them annual training on best practices for conducting outreach.

VA is currently implementing the VJO Program's Strategic Plan which includes enhancing outreach to veterans by providing VJO staff with more in-depth training and teaching them best practices for outreach. The department also plans to increase the number of VJO specialists in 2022 and has indicated that it plans to prioritize requests from medical centers that serve veterans in rural and underserved areas. Furthermore, VA plans to establish performance goals, measures, and timelines for the program. On that basis, CBO estimates



the implementing the bill's requirements would not increase costs because it would codify VA's current plans.

The bill would require VA to develop and report to the Congress on its strategy, performance measures, implementation plans, and other elements of the VJO program. In addition, VA would be required to coordinate with the Department of Justice to report on VA's engagement with veterans' treatment courts to the Congress. Based on costs for similar reports, CBO estimates that satisfying those reporting requirements would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2022-2026 period. Such spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

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