



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE**

May 10, 2002

H.R. 3253

**Department of Veterans Affairs Emergency Preparedness Research,
Education, and Bio-Terrorism Prevention Act of 2002**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on May 9, 2002

SUMMARY

H.R. 3253 would establish at least four medical emergency centers that would carry out research and development, provide education and training, and provide assistance in the case of a national emergency with regard to chemical, biological, and radiological threats. These emergency centers would be located in hospitals operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). H.R. 3253 would authorize appropriations of \$20 million a year over the 2003-2007 period to operate these centers. As part of the requirement to provide education and training, the bill would require VA to carry out a joint program with the Department of Defense (DoD) to develop and disseminate a series of training programs on the medical responses to terrorist activities. Finally, H.R. 3253 would increase the number of Assistant Secretaries within the VA from six to seven with the new assistant secretary being responsible for operations, preparedness, security, and law enforcement functions.

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 3253 would cost \$12 million in 2003 and \$87 million over the 2003-2007 period, assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts. Because the bill would not affect direct spending or receipts, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply.

H.R. 3253 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 3253 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 700 (veterans benefits and services).

By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					
2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007

CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION^a

Spending for VA Medical Emergency Centers Under H.R. 3253						
Authorization Level	0	20	20	20	20	20
Estimated Outlays	0	12	16	19	20	20

a. No funds were appropriated for these purposes in 2002.

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

VA has some limited responsibilities to provide assistance in the event of a chemical, biological, or radiological (CBR) threat under current law. Under H.R. 3253, VA would have expanded responsibility to assist with CBR threats with the creation of four medical emergency centers that would carry out VA's new responsibilities. H.R. 3253 would specifically authorize appropriations of \$20 million a year over the 2003-2007 period for the operation of these centers and would authorize the use of other appropriated funds to carry out the centers' activities. Assuming normal delays in beginning new programs and appropriation of the authorized amounts, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 3253 would increase spending by \$12 million in 2003 and by \$87 million over the 2003-2007 period.

The bill would require that VA establish four medical emergency centers that would have three different responsibilities. The first would be to conduct research and development on detection, diagnosis, vaccination, protection, and treatment on CBR threats to the public health and safety. The second responsibility would be to provide training and advice to health care professionals outside of VA, in conjunction with DoD. The third responsibility would be to provide contingent rapid response assistance including laboratory assistance in the event of national emergencies.

CBO estimates that all of these responsibilities could be carried out for the authorized \$20 million a year. Although setup and operating costs would come from appropriated funds, the actual costs of the research and development would come from public and private research grants. Using information from VA, CBO estimates that the cost of providing education and training would be about \$5 million a year. Barring any major national emergencies, CBO does not expect that VA would spend more than the \$20 million in appropriations specifically authorized in H.R. 3253.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS: None.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT

H.R. 3253 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

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