



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE**

May 18, 2010

H.R. 5145
Assuring Quality Care for Veterans Act
As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on May 12, 2010

H.R. 5145 would expand an existing program at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to reimburse employees for the expenses of continuing professional education. CBO estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$41 million over the 2011-2015 period, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts. Enacting this legislation would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply.

H.R. 5145 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 5145 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					2011- 2015
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION						
Estimated Authorization Level	4	9	9	10	10	42
Estimated Outlays	4	8	9	10	10	41

Under current law, VHA is required to reimburse board-certified dentists and physicians, up to \$1,000 a year, for the expenses they incur in taking courses to maintain their professional credentials. According to VHA, there are over 9,500 employees eligible for the program but few request reimbursements because many such educational opportunities are provided free at VHA facilities.

The bill would expand the pool of eligible employees to include several other occupations and would increase the maximum reimbursement to \$1,600 a year. It also would give VHA discretion in deciding whether to reimburse employees. Based on information from VHA, CBO estimates that almost 94,000 employees would be eligible under the bill but that, on average, VHA would reimburse \$1,000 each to about 9,300 employees a year. Assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts, a two-year phase-in period, and annual adjustments for inflation, CBO estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$4 million in 2011, growing to \$10 million a year by 2014.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Sunita D'Monte. The estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.