



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

October 23, 2017

H.R. 3656

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for a consistent eligibility date for provision of Department of Veterans Affairs memorial headstones and markers for eligible spouses and dependent children of veterans whose remains are unavailable

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
on October 12, 2017*

The Veterans Programs Enhancement Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-368) authorized the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide, upon request, a memorial headstone (for placement in a national or state veterans' cemetery) to commemorate the deceased spouse or un-remarried surviving spouse of a veteran in certain instances where the spousal remains are not available. Subsequent public laws extended this benefit to certain dependent children and remarried survivors, but those acts only applied the benefit to those who died after 2006 and 2008, respectively. H.R. 3656 would extend this benefit to all eligible beneficiaries who died on or after November 11, 1998.

Because burial benefits are paid from mandatory appropriations, enacting H.R. 3656 would increase direct spending; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures apply. Based on an analysis of data from VA, CBO estimates about 2,000 additional headstones would be provided under H.R. 3656, at an average cost of about \$200 per headstone. Therefore, CBO estimates that the increased direct spending would be insignificant for each year and would total less than \$500,000 over the 2018-2027 period. Enacting H.R. 3656 would not affect revenues.

CBO estimates that enacting H.R. 3656 would not significantly increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2028.

H.R. 3656 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Matt Schmit. The estimate was approved by H. Samuel Papenfuss, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.