



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

May 17, 2016

S. 2127 **Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act of 2015**

*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs on December 9, 2015*

S. 2127 would modify several personnel and administrative procedures at federal agencies—some of which would be specific to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)—and would require two reports. CBO estimates that implementing S. 2127 would cost \$3 million over the 2017-2021 period; that spending would be subject to the availability of appropriated funds. Enacting S. 2127 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

S. 2127 would require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to prepare two reports: one discussing retaliation against employees on probationary status and the other assessing management and staffing levels of police officers at VA medical centers. On the basis of costs for similar reports, CBO estimates that completing those reports would cost \$2 million over the 2017-2021 period.

Additionally, S. 2127 contains several provisions that would modify personnel and administrative procedures at VA and other federal agencies. On the basis of information from VA and the Office of Special Counsel, CBO expects that each provision would have an insignificant budgetary effect because they would either largely codify current practice or affect few people. On that basis, CBO estimates that implementing the following requirements, in total, would cost \$1 million over the 2017-2021 period. Those provisions would:

- Add protections for probationary employees;
- Improve the ability of the Office of Special Counsel to access certain types of information;
- Limit access to medical records of employees and create a plan to prevent unauthorized access of medical records by VA employees;
- Prescribe disciplinary actions to be taken against supervisors who retaliate against employees identified as whistleblowers;

- Require training for supervisors on protections for whistleblowers;
- Provide information to employees and the public about whistleblower protections;
- Increase outreach to employees about mental health services at VA; and
- Ensure protocols are in place to address threats to VA employees by patients of VA medical centers.

CBO estimates that enacting S. 2127 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2027.

S. 2127 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

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