

H.R. 1448, Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act

As passed by the House of Representatives on May 12, 2021

By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars	2021	2021-2026	2021-2031
Direct Spending (Outlays)	0	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0
Increase or Decrease (-) in the Deficit	0	0	0
Spending Subject to Appropriation (Outlays)	*	30	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. 1448 would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out a pilot program to teach veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to train and handle service dogs. The act also would require VA to provide veterinary health insurance for service dogs it places with veterans who have PTSD. In total, CBO estimates that implementing the act would cost \$30 million over the 2021-2026 period. Such spending would be subject to the appropriation of estimated amounts. For this estimate, CBO assumes that the legislation will be enacted in fiscal year 2021. Under that assumption, the department could incur some costs in 2021, but CBO expects that most of the costs would be incurred in 2022 and later.

Section 2 would require VA to collaborate with nongovernmental entities that would teach veterans with PTSD to train service dogs in at least five VA medical centers over a five-year period. Using information about participation rates and costs of similar training offered by several service-dog programs, CBO estimates that 150 veterans would participate in the program each year at an average cost of \$27,000 per participant. After accounting for inflation, that training would cost \$23 million, CBO estimates.

H.R. 1448 also would require VA to report to the Congress on the program outcomes and recommend whether to continue and expand the program. It also would require the

Government Accountability Office to conduct a study and report to the Congress on the program’s methodology and results. Based on costs for similar evaluations and reports, CBO estimates that satisfying the reporting requirements would cost \$2 million. In total, implementing section 2 would cost \$25 million over the 2021-2026 period.

VA provides veterinary insurance for dogs that have been placed with veterans who have mobility impairments; it does not insure dogs placed with veterans who are not so impaired. Section 3 would require VA to provide such insurance for each service dog that is placed with a veteran who has PTSD, regardless of whether the veteran has a mobility impairment. Using information from VA, CBO estimates that the department would insure another 225 service dogs at an annual rate of \$3,700; thus, providing the veterinary health insurance benefit would cost \$5 million over the 2021-2026 period, CBO estimates.

The costs of the legislation, detailed in Table 1, fall within budget function 700 (veterans’ benefits and services).

Table 1.
Estimated Increases in Spending Subject to Appropriation Under H.R. 1448

	By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars						2021-2026
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
Training Program							
Estimated Authorization	*	5	5	5	5	5	25
Estimated Outlays	*	5	5	5	5	5	25
Insurance							
Estimated Authorization	*	1	1	1	1	1	5
Estimated Outlays	*	1	1	1	1	1	5
Total Changes							
Estimated Authorization	*	6	6	6	6	6	30
Estimated Outlays	*	6	6	6	6	6	30

* = between zero and \$500,000.

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