AMENDMENT TO RULES COMMITTEE PRINT 115–70

OFFERED BY MS. SHEA-PORTER OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

At the end of subtitle C of title VII, add the following new section:

SEC. 7. SERVICE DOG TRAINING THERAPY FOR MEMBERS WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER OR OTHER POST-DEPLOYMENT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS.

(a) PROGRAM.—The Secretary of Defense, acting through the Director of the Defense Health Agency, shall carry out a program under which members of the Armed Forces with post-traumatic stress disorder or other post-deployment mental health conditions train service dogs for veterans with disabilities. The Secretary shall carry out the program in a manner that ensures that such training is a form of therapy that addresses such post-traumatic stress disorder or other post-deployment mental health conditions.

(b) APPROPRIATE NONGOVERNMENT ENTITIES.—The Secretary shall carry out the program under subsection (a) by entering into a contract with one or more
appropriate nongovernment entities that are certified in
the training and handling of service dogs and have experi-
ce carrying out such a program.

(c) MEMBER ELIGIBILITY.—A member of the Armed
Forces may participate in the program under subsection
(a) if the Secretary determines that—

(1) such member has post-traumatic stress dis-
order or other post-deployment mental health condi-
tions; and

(2) there are adequate program resources avail-
able for the member to participate at the location of
the member.

(d) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall seek to enter
into a contract under subsection (b) with appropriate non-
government entities located in close proximity to military
medical treatment facilities.

(e) TRAINING AREA.—The Secretary shall provide to
a nongovernment entity with which the Secretary enters
into a contract under subsection (b) access to a training
area in a facility of the Department that would be appro-
priate for use in educating members of the Armed Forces
participating in the program in the art and science of serv-
vice dog training and handling. Such training area shall—

(1) include a dedicated space that is suitable
for grooming and training dogs indoors;
(2) be wheelchair accessible;
(3) include classroom or lecture space;
(4) include office space for staff;
(5) include a suitable space for storing training equipment;
(6) provide for periodic use of other training areas for training the dogs with wheelchairs and conducting other exercises;
(7) include outdoor exercise and toileting space for dogs; and
(8) provide transportation for weekly field trips to train dogs in other environments.

(f) DESIGN OF PROGRAM.—Each contract entered into under subsection (b) shall provide that the nongovernment entity shall—

(1) employ at least one person with clinical experience related to mental health;
(2) ensure that members of the Armed Forces participating in the program receive training from certified service dog training instructors;
(3) ensure that each service dog in training participating in the program is taught all essential commands pertaining to service dog skills;
(4) ensure that the program involves both lecture of service dog training methodologies and prac-
tical hands-on training and grooming of service
dogs; and

(5) ensure that the program is designed to—

(A) maximize the therapeutic benefits to
members of the Armed Forces participating in
the program; and

(B) provide well-trained service dogs to
veterans with disabilities.

(g) ADMINISTRATION.—In order to carry out the pro-
gram under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(1) administer the program through the De-
fense Health Agency under the direction of a cer-
tified occupational recreational therapist with suffi-
cient administrative experience to help oversee the
program; and

(2) establish a director of therapeutic service
dog training with a background working in social
services, experience in teaching others to train serv-
ice dogs in a military medical treatment facility set-
ting, and at least one year of experience working
with veterans or active duty service members with
post-traumatic stress disorder in a clinical setting.

(h) COLLECTION OF DATA.—The Secretary shall col-
lect data on the program under subsection (a) to deter-
mine how effective the program is for the members of the
Armed Forces participating in the program. Such data shall include data to determine how effectively the program assists members in—

(1) reducing stigma associated with post-traumatic stress disorder or other post-deployment mental health conditions;

(2) improving emotional regulation;

(3) improving patience;

(4) instilling or re-establishing a sense of purpose;

(5) providing an opportunity to help veterans;

(6) reintegrating into the community;

(7) exposing the dog to new environments and in doing so, helping the member reduce social isolation and withdrawal;

(8) building relationship skills, including parenting skills;

(9) relaxing the hyper-vigilant survival state;

(10) improving sleep patterns; and

(11) enabling members to decrease the use of pain medication.

(i) REPORTS.—Each year the Secretary shall submit to the Committees’ on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the program under subsection (a). Each such report shall include—
(1) the number of members of the Armed Forces participating in the program;

(2) a description of the services carried out under the program;

(3) the effects that participating in the program has on—

(A) symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and post-deployment adjustment difficulties, including depression, maintenance of sobriety, suicidal ideations, and homelessness;

(B) potentially relevant physiological markers that possibly relate to the interactions with the service dogs;

(C) family dynamics;

(D) insomnia and pain management; and

(E) overall well-being; and

(4) the recommendations of the Secretary with respect to the expansion of the program.

(j) Service Dog Training Instructor Defined.—In this section, the term “service dog training instructor” means an instructor who provides the direct training of members of the Armed Forces with post-traumatic stress disorder and other post-deployment mental health conditions.
health conditions in the art and science of service dog training and handling.