#### 111TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1401

To create a service corps of veterans called Veterans Engaged for Tomorrow (VET) Corps focused on promoting and improving the service opportunities for veterans and retired members of the military by engaging such veterans and retired members in projects designed to meet identifiable public needs with a specific emphasis on projects to support veterans, including disabled and older veterans and retired members of the military.

#### IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 9, 2009

Mr. Sarbanes (for himself, Mr. Hare, Mrs. Davis of California, Mr. Loebsack, Mr. Wilson of Ohio, Mr. Mollohan, Mr. Rothman of New Jersey, Ms. Sutton, Mr. Braley of Iowa, Mr. Sires, Mr. Arcuri, Mr. Perlmutter, and Ms. Degette) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

## A BILL

To create a service corps of veterans called Veterans Engaged for Tomorrow (VET) Corps focused on promoting and improving the service opportunities for veterans and retired members of the military by engaging such veterans and retired members in projects designed to meet identifiable public needs with a specific emphasis on projects to support veterans, including disabled and older veterans and retired members of the military.

- 1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
- 2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

### 1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

- 2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
- 3 "VET Corps Act of 2009".
- 4 (b) Table of Contents.—

Sec. 1. Short title; Table of Contents.

Sec. 2. VET Corps.

#### "Subtitle J—VET Corps

- "Sec. 199AA. Purposes of Vet Corps.
- "Sec. 199BB. Establishment of VET Corps; Administrative provisions.
- "Sec. 199CC. VET Corps members.
- "Sec. 199DD. Authority to provide assistance to VET Corps projects.
- "Sec. 199EE. Consultation.
- "Sec. 199FF. Training and Technical assistance.
- "Sec. 199GG. Definitions.

Sec. 3. Authorization of Appropriations.

#### 5 SEC. 2. VET CORPS.

- 6 (a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:
- 7 (1) The veteran population is estimated by the
- 8 Department of Veterans Affairs to be around
- 9 23,400,000 and growing.
- 10 (2) Today, an estimated 1,640,000 United
- 11 States troops have deployed as part of Operation
- 12 Enduring Freedom (OEF; Afghanistan) and Oper-
- ation Iraqi Freedom (OIF; Iraq). In total 2,950,000
- 14 veterans receive disability compensation, with
- 15 261,897 having a 100 percent disability rating. As
- of September of 2007, 223,564 OEF/OIF veterans
- 17 filed for disability claims.
- 18 (3) A 2007 survey for the Department of Vet-
- 19 erans Affairs discovered veterans of all ages tend to

- have an unemployment rate double that of similar
   nonveterans, with returning veterans experiencing
   the highest rate of unemployment at 18 percent.
  - (4) Veterans often have difficulty transitioning to civilian life.
  - (5) Military and national service is a foundation for a continued commitment to service.
  - (6) The specific experience and expertise of veterans make them uniquely qualified to serve other veterans.
  - (7) The Civilian Conservations Corps (CCC) established in 1933, which provided work and vocational training for 3,500,000 unemployed young Americans, was one of the singularly successful Federal programs in American history.
  - (8) The Senior Corps established in 1973 to expand the role of older volunteers, enrolls more than 500,000 volunteers each year and in their first 10 years contributed over 1,100,000,000 hours of service to communities nationwide.
  - (9) In a manner similar to the CCC of the 1930s and the Senior Corps of today, veterans can be mobilized to perform outreach to the veteran community to guide them to appropriate services and assist them in necessary activities.

1	(b) GENERAL AUTHORITY.—Title I of the National
2	and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12511
3	et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:
4	"Subtitle J—VET Corps
5	"SEC. 199AA. PURPOSES OF VET CORPS.
6	"It is the purpose of this subtitle to authorize the
7	establishment of Veterans Engaged for Tomorrow Corps
8	(in this Act referred to as 'VET Corps')—
9	"(1) to create a service corps of veterans, com-
10	posed of veterans, retired military personnel, or fam-
11	ily members of veterans, or retired military per-
12	sonnel to help such individuals to obtain job train-
13	ing, professional certification, or access to post-sec-
14	ondary education or employers and otherwise to
15	serve their communities through national and com-
16	munity service programs;
17	"(2) to create a service corps that supports ex-
18	isting outreach efforts of Veteran Service Organiza-
19	tions, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the
20	Department of Defense in order to inform veterans
21	about available services and benefits;
22	"(3) to create a service corps that will act as
23	a clearinghouse to direct any person desiring to
24	serve the veteran population to such opportunities in
25	cooperation with other service corps programs, Vet-

1	erans Service Organizations, the Department of Vet-
2	erans Affairs, and the Department of Defense;
3	"(4) to create a service corps to coordinate with
4	the Veteran Service Organizations, the Department
5	of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and
6	other Federal agencies to identify and address exist-
7	ing and future needs and challenges of veterans; and
8	"(5) to create a service corps that provides vet-
9	erans of all ages with opportunities to adjust to civil-
10	ian life.
11	"SEC. 199BB. ESTABLISHMENT OF VET CORPS; ADMINIS-
12	TRATIVE PROVISIONS.
13	"(a) In General.—The Corporation shall establish
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13 14	"(a) In General.—The Corporation shall establish VET Corps to carry out the purposes described in section
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13 14 15 16 17 18	"(a) In General.—The Corporation shall establish VET Corps to carry out the purposes described in section 199AA.  "(b) Staff.—  "(1) Appointment.—Upon the establishment of VET Corps, the Chief Executive Officer shall appoint a Director. The Director may be selected from
13 14 15 16 17 18 19	"(a) In General.—The Corporation shall establish VET Corps to carry out the purposes described in section 199AA.  "(b) Staff.—  "(1) Appointment.—Upon the establishment of VET Corps, the Chief Executive Officer shall appoint a Director. The Director may be selected from among retired commissioned officers of the Armed
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	"(a) In General.—The Corporation shall establish VET Corps to carry out the purposes described in section 199AA.  "(b) Staff.—  "(1) Appointment.—Upon the establishment of VET Corps, the Chief Executive Officer shall appoint a Director. The Director may be selected from among retired commissioned officers of the Armed Forces of the United States.

- 1 "(B) be responsible for managing the daily 2 operations of the Corps; and
- 3 "(C) report to the Chief Executive Officer.
  - "(3) Authority to employ staff.—The Director may employ such staff as is necessary to carry out this subtitle. The Director shall, to the maximum extent practicable, utilize in staff positions personnel who are detailed from departments and agencies of the Federal Government and, to the extent the Director considers appropriate, shall request and accept detail of personnel from such departments and agencies in order to do so.
    - "(4) Inapplicability of Certain Civil Service Laws.—The Director and staff personnel shall be appointed without regard to provisions of title 5, United States Code, governing appointments in the competitive service. The rates of pay of such persons may be established without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of such title.
    - "(5) Voluntary services.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Director may accept the voluntary services of individuals. While away from their homes or regular places of business on the business of the Corps, such individuals may be

- 1 allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of
- 2 subsistence, in the same amounts and to the same
- 3 extent, as authorized under section 5703 of title 5,
- 4 United States Code, for persons employed intermit-
- 5 tently in the Federal Government.

#### 6 "SEC. 199CC. VET CORPS MEMBERS.

- 7 "(a) Membership in VET Corps.—
- 8 "(1) Participants to be members.—Persons
- 9 selected to participate in any VET Corps project re-
- ceiving a grant under the 199DD shall become mem-
- bers of the VET Corps.
- 12 "(2) Selection of Members.—The Director
- shall select individuals for membership in the Corps.
- 14 Such individuals shall consist of veterans, retired
- military personnel, or family members of veterans or
- retired military personnel, with preference given to
- veterans and retired military personnel.
- 18 "(b) Application for Membership.—To be se-
- 19 lected to become a Corps member an individual shall sub-
- 20 mit an application to the Director or any other office as
- 21 the Director may designate, at such time, in such manner,
- 22 and containing such information as the Director shall re-
- 23 quire. At a minimum, the application shall contain an as-
- 24 surance that the individual is a veteran or retired military

1	personnel who did not withdraw from military service for
2	the purpose of becoming a member of VET Corps.
3	"(c) Duration.—Individuals may be members of
4	VET Corps for up to 24 months.
5	"(d) Status of Corps Members Under Federal
6	Law.—Except as otherwise provided in this subtitle, mem-
7	bers of VET Corps shall not, by reason of their status
8	as such members, be considered Federal employees or be
9	subject to the provisions of law relating to Federal employ-
10	ment.
11	"(e) Authorized Benefits for Corps Mem-
12	BERS.—
13	"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall provide
14	for members of the VET Corps to receive benefits
15	authorized by this subsection.
16	"(2) LIVING ALLOWANCE.—The Director shall
17	provide a living allowance to members of the Corps
18	for the period during which such members are en-
19	gaged in residential Corps programs.
20	"(3) OTHER AUTHORIZED BENEFITS.—While
21	receiving training or engaging in service projects as
22	members of the VET Corps, members may be pro-
23	vided the following benefits:
24	"(A) Allowance for travel expenses, per-
25	sonal expenses, and other expenses.

1	"(B) Quarters.
2	"(C) Subsistence.
3	"(D) Transportation.
4	"(E) Other services determined by the Di-
5	rector to be consistent with the purposes of
6	VET Corps.
7	"(4) NATIONAL SERVICE EDUCATIONAL
8	AWARDS.—A Corps member who successfully com-
9	pletes a period of agreed service in the Corps shall
10	be considered to have served in an approved national
11	service position and, upon meeting the requirements
12	of section 147 for full-time or part-time national
13	service, shall be eligible for a national service edu-
14	cational award described in such section. The Cor-
15	poration (through the Director) shall transfer an ap-
16	propriate amount of funds to the National Service
17	Trust to provide for the national service educational
18	awards for such member.
19	"(5) Health insurance.—
20	"(A) IN GENERAL.—A VET Corps project
21	receiving assistance under section 199DD shall
22	provide a basic health care policy for each full-
23	time participant in a service project carried out
24	or supported using the assistance, if the partici-

pant is not otherwise covered by a health care

policy. Not more than 85 percent of the cost of a premium shall be provided by the Director, with the remaining cost paid by the entity receiving assistance under section 199DD. The Director shall establish minimum standards that all plans must meet in order to qualify for payment under this section, any circumstances in which an alternative health care policy may be substituted for the basic health care policy, and mechanisms to prohibit participants from dropping existing coverage.

"(B) OPTION.—A VET Corps project receiving assistance under section 199DD may elect to provide from its own funds a health care policy for participants that does not meet all of the standards established by the Director if the fair market value of such policy is equal to or greater than the fair market value of a plan that meets the minimum standards established by the Director, and is consistent with other applicable laws.

"(6) Determination of Benefits.—In determining the authorized benefits a member receives under this subsection, the Director shall take into account the educational, social, and family cir-

1	cumstances of such member, including whether such
2	member has graduated from an institution of higher
3	education, is unemployed, or has had contact with
4	the justice system.
5	"SEC. 199DD. AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO VET
6	CORPS PROJECTS.
7	"(a) Provision of Assistance.—From amounts
8	appropriated for a fiscal year under section 501(a)(4), the
9	Corporation shall make grants to Veteran Service Organi-
10	zations, nonprofit organizations, Federal agencies, State
11	or local governments, or institutions of higher education
12	for the purpose of establishing, operating, and supporting
13	a VET Corps project.
14	"(b) Application.—
15	"(1) In general.—To be eligible to receive as-
16	sistance under this section, a Veteran Service Orga-
17	nizations, nonprofit organization, Federal, State, or
18	local government, or institution of higher education
19	shall prepare and submit to the Director an applica-
20	tion at such time, in such manner, and containing
21	such information as the Corporation may reasonably
22	require.
23	"(2) Required information.—An application
24	submitted under paragraph (1) shall include—

1	"(A) a description of how the VET Corps
2	project to be carried out directly by such appli-
3	cant using funds provided under this section—
4	"(i) will assist participants in obtain-
5	ing admission into an institution of higher
6	education, a job credential, further job
7	training, or employment;
8	"(ii) will meet all the VET indicators,
9	and engage participants in activities that
10	will improve the project's performance on
11	such indicators; and
12	"(iii) will improve performance on the
13	VET indicators in a geographic area dem-
14	onstrating the need to improve such indica-
15	tors based on the demographic information
16	of veterans and retired military personnel
17	in such area and other statistics;
18	"(B) a description of the type of positions
19	which participants will be placed into using the
20	funds under this section, including descriptions
21	of the specific tasks to be performed by such
22	participants, and the minimum qualifications
23	that individuals will be required to meet to be-
24	come participants in such project;

1	"(C) the number of proposed full- and
2	part-time national service positions for which
3	participants will receive the national service
4	educational award described in subtitle D;
5	"(D) an assurance that the applicant will
6	comply with the nonduplication and non-
7	displacement provisions of section 177; and
8	"(E) a description of how the applicant—
9	"(i) in cooperation with other service
10	corps authorized under the national service
11	laws, Veterans Service Organizations, the
12	Department of Veterans Affairs, and the
13	Department of Defense will act as a clear-
14	inghouse by directing any person desiring
15	to serve the veteran population to such op-
16	portunities; and
17	"(ii) if applicable, will work with other
18	community-based agencies to carry out ac-
19	tivities to improve performance of the VET
20	Corps indicators
21	"(c) Eligible VET Corps Projects.—The recipi-
22	ent of a grant under this section shall use the grant funds
23	to carry out service projects that address veteran needs,
24	which may include—

1	"(1) building housing for veterans and others in
2	need of such services;
3	"(2) assisting with rehabilitative classes such as
4	physical therapy or life skills development;
5	"(3) providing services in veterans' hospitals or
6	community-based outpatient clinics;
7	"(4) assisting with outreach of Veteran Services
8	Organizations and other service corps to help vet-
9	erans and retired military personnel with the transi-
10	tion from active duty service as a member of the
11	Armed Forces to becoming a veteran or retiring
12	from military life;
13	"(5) the repair, renovation, or adaption of
14	homes or vehicles of disabled veterans;
15	"(6) performing outreach to the veteran and re-
16	tired military personnel community to provide them
17	information and access to services available to them;
18	"(7) assisting in other such activities as a re-
19	cipient of a grant under this section may identify;
20	"(8) providing services to military families dur-
21	ing overseas deployment; and
22	"(9) fostering mentoring relationships between
23	veterans and nonveterans.

1	"(d) Preference for Certain Projects.—In the
2	consideration of applications submitted under this section
3	the Director shall give preference to projects that—
4	"(1) provide development, training, and prac-
5	tical work experience for veterans and retired mem-
6	bers of the military in important career fields and
7	act as preparation for additional education or per-
8	manent employment for veterans and retired mem-
9	bers of the military which will provide long-term
10	benefits to the public;
11	"(2) can be planned and initiated promptly; and
12	"(3) will provide academic, experiential, or com-
13	munity education opportunities.
14	"(e) Evaluation.—
15	"(1) EVALUATION.—Subject to paragraph (2)
16	the Director shall develop evaluation criteria and
17	performance goals, including recruitment and reten-
18	tion goals, applicable to all VET Corps projects car-
19	ried out with assistance provided under this section
20	"(2) Alternative evaluation require-
21	MENTS.—The Director may establish alternative
22	evaluation requirements, such as requirements that
23	provide flexibility in the recruitment and retention

outcomes, for VET Corps projects based upon the

- 1 amount of assistance received in this section and the
- 2 demographics of participants.

#### 3 "SEC. 199EE. CONSULTATION.

- 4 "The Director shall consult with the Secretary of Vet-
- 5 erans Affairs and Veteran Service Organizations, the Sec-
- 6 retary of Defense, and the heads of other Federal agen-
- 7 cies, as appropriate, in making grants under subsection
- 8 199DD, developing additional VET indicators, and in re-
- 9 cruiting VET Corps members.

#### 10 "SEC. 199FF. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

- 11 "From amounts appropriated for a fiscal year under
- 12 section 501(a), the Director shall ensure that the VET
- 13 Corps (including each recipient of a grant under this sub-
- 14 title) has adequate access to relevant training and tech-
- 15 nical assistance services, such as services to assist with
- 16 improving performance on VET indicators, which shall be
- 17 provided, by grant or contract, through at least 1 national
- 18 non-profit organization with a demonstrated record of ex-
- 19 perience in promoting and disseminating effective prac-
- 20 tices among service corps.

#### 21 "SEC. 199GG. DEFINITIONS.

- "For the purposes of this subtitle:
- 23 "(a) Veteran.—The term 'veteran' means a person
- 24 who—

1	"(1) serves on active duty (other than active
2	duty for training) as a member of the Armed
3	Forces—
4	"(A) for a period of at least 180 days; or
5	"(B) for a shorter period of time in the
6	case of a person who is discharged or released
7	from such service for a service-connected dis-
8	ability; and
9	"(2) is discharged or released from such service
10	under conditions other than dishonorable.
11	"(b) Retired Military Personnel.—The term
12	'retired military personnel' means the following:
13	"(1) Regular and Reserve officers and enlisted
14	members who retire from the Military Services under
15	chapters 61, 63, 65, 67, 367, 571, 573, or 867 of
16	title 10, United States Code, and chapters 11 and
17	21 of title 14, United States Code.
18	"(2) Reserve officers and enlisted members eli-
19	gible for retirement who have not reached age 60
20	and who have not elected discharge or are not mem-
21	bers of the Ready Reserve or Standby Reserve (in-
22	cluding members of the Inactive Standby Reserve).
23	"(3) Members of the Fleet Reserve and Fleet
24	Marine Corps Reserve under section 6330 of title
25	10, United States Code.

1	"(c) VET INDICATORS.—The term 'VET Indicators'
2	means—
3	"(1) promoting and improving the service op-
4	portunities for veterans;
5	"(2) engaging veterans and retired military per-
6	sonnel; and
7	"(3) projects designed to meet identifiable pub-
8	lic needs with a specific emphasis on projects in sup-
9	port of veterans, especially disabled and older vet-
10	erans and retired military personnel.".
11	SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.
11	SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.  Section 501(a) of the National and Community Serv-
12	Section 501(a) of the National and Community Serv-
12 13	Section 501(a) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)) is amended—
12 13 14	Section 501(a) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)) is amended—  (1) by inserting after paragraph (3) the fol-
12 13 14 15	Section 501(a) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)) is amended—  (1) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following:
12 13 14 15	Section 501(a) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)) is amended—  (1) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following:  "(4) Subtitle J.—There are authorized to be
112 113 114 115 116	Section 501(a) of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12681(a)) is amended—  (1) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following:  "(4) Subtitle J.—There are authorized to be appropriated \$100,000,000 for each of fiscal years

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