



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

March 29, 2000

S. 1638

A bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to extend the retroactive eligibility dates for financial assistance for higher education for spouses and dependent children of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers who are killed in the line of duty

As reported by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on February 10, 2000

SUMMARY

Under current law, the spouses and children of public safety officers killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty are eligible to receive financial assistance for higher education. However, this assistance is available only to dependents of federal law enforcement officers who were killed or disabled on or after May 1, 1992, and to dependents of other public safety officers who were killed or disabled on or after October 1, 1997. S. 1638 would extend both of these cutoff dates back to 1978. CBO estimates that the bill would authorize the appropriation of about \$14 million over fiscal years 2000 through 2005 to provide educational assistance to dependents who would become eligible under this bill.

Enacting S. 1638 would not affect direct spending or receipts, so pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply. The bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary impact of S. 1638 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 750 (administration of justice).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005

CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION

Estimated Authorization Level	0	2	2	4	4	3
Estimated Outlay	0	2	2	4	4	3

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For the purposes of this estimate, CBO assumes that the bill will be enacted by the end of fiscal year 2000, and that payments to eligible spouses and children would begin in 2001. Based on the ages of dependents that would become eligible for assistance under this legislation, we expect that they would apply for financial assistance over the next 20 years, with most doing so by 2010. We estimate that S. 1638 would authorize the appropriation of about \$14 million over the 2001-2005 period and about \$24 million over the next 10 years.

According to the Department of Justice (DOJ), about 4,100 federal law enforcement officers and other public safety officers were killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty during the 19-year period of eligibility for education benefits that would be added by S. 1638. Spouses and children of these officers number about 2,900 and 3,400, respectively. All of the spouses, but only children under the age of 27, would be eligible for educational assistance under S. 1638, with the children of public safety officers expected to comprise the majority of beneficiaries. We estimate current or future students could receive payments of about \$3,600 per year (in 2000 dollars), while dependents who have completed their education could receive a retroactive lump-sum payment of about \$15,000.

Since the educational assistance program began in 1997 for dependents of federal law enforcement officers, about 50 percent of federal college-age dependents have received assistance. This program began in 1999 for dependents of other public safety officers, and less than 5 percent of eligible college-age dependents have received educational assistance thus far. Based on information from DOJ, we expect nonfederal participation to approach 50 percent as the program's visibility grows and as more children complete high school. However, CBO expects that participation by dependents under S. 1638 would be lower because some dependents are already 27 years old or older, and thus would not be eligible for assistance. CBO estimates that roughly 40 percent of the children and 10 percent of the spouses, or about 1,700 individuals, eventually could receive financial assistance for higher education under S. 1638.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS: None.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT

S. 1638 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

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