

Vets could get edge on no-bid contracts at VA

Bill would require VA to award sole-source contracts to veteran-owned small businesses

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A new bill could intensify turf battles over preferences for certain types of small businesses.

Rep. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.), a colonel in the Army Reserves and a veteran of Operation Desert Storm, introduced [legislation](#) on July 15 that would require the Veterans Affairs Department to give priority to veteran-owned small businesses when outsourcing work with no competition.

The three-page bill would change a “may” to a “shall” and put veterans at the top of the list when VA's contracting officers intend to award a sole-source contract. Also, veterans who own more than one company would be able to keep all their businesses in the VA's database of veteran business owners, according to the legislation.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee has yet to consider the bill.

The legislation comes as the Obama administration and the Government Accountability Office are in a standoff over the difference between “may” and “shall” in law. As GAO sees it, small businesses in Historically Underutilized Business Zones have priority over all other types of small businesses, such as those owned by service-disabled veterans and firms in the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program (see "[Administration, GAO clash in turf war](#)").