

## Military and Veteran's Affairs

### *Timeline*

1. April 15, 2007: Governor Patrick signs Executive Order No. 483, "Establishing A Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services," (A-2, B-2).
2. April 4, 2008: Governor Patrick signs "Resolve Providing for an Investigation and Study by a Special Commission Relative to the Hidden Wounds of War on Massachusetts Services Members," establishing Commission to Study the Hidden Wounds of War on Returning Massachusetts Service Members (A-6, B-71).
3. June 15, 2009: Lieutenant Governor Murray announces the details of the Patrick-Murray Administration's 2009 MASS Veterans Tour: Massachusetts Awareness for Support and Services (A-14).
4. November 11, 2009: Governor Patrick signs "An Act Providing Benefits to Veterans and Service Members," (A-23, B-94).
5. February 27, 2012: Lieutenant Governor Murray signs Executive Order No. 541 "Establishing the Commonwealth's Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force" (A-71, B-6).
6. March 8, 2013: Governor Patrick signs Executive Order No. 546 "Establishing the Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business Enterprise Program" (A-103, B-11).
7. May 31, 2012: Governor Patrick signs "An Act Relative to Veterans' Access, Livelihood, Opportunity, and Resources," also known as the VALOR Act (A-82, B-73).

### *Achievements*

#### Executive Order No. 483 "Establishing A Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services (2007, B-2)"<sup>1</sup>

- Establishes the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services to advise the Governor and the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Veterans' Services on issues relating to veterans of the Commonwealth.
- The council shall review and assess state and federal statues and programs relating to veterans, and the delivery of services to veterans, including health care, education, housing, outreach, training and retraining, so that it can educate the people of the Commonwealth and their elected and appointed officials regarding issues of importance to the Commonwealth's veterans.

#### An Act Providing Benefits to Veterans and Service Members (2009, B-94)<sup>2</sup>

- Expands the "Welcome Home" bonus from a one-time \$1,000 payment to an additional \$500 payment for each additional overseas deployment.
- Allows service members stationed abroad to cast electronic ballots for elections.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Executive Order No. 483 'Establishing A Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services'" (B-3).

<sup>2</sup> "On Veterans Day, Governor Patrick Signs Bill Expanding Benefits and Services to Veterans Across Massachusetts" (A-23).

- Stipulates that service-disabled veterans will be included within the existing preferences for hiring of veterans for construction and public-works contracts.
- Calls for the establishment of a “Medal of Liberty” that would be awarded to the next of kin of any Massachusetts service member killed in action or who dies as a result of wounds received while in action.

Executive Order No. 541 “Establishing the Commonwealth’s Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force” (2012, B-6)<sup>3</sup>

- Establishes the Commonwealth’s Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force to protect and expand missions, jobs, and economic investments at and surrounding Massachusetts’ federal and state military installations by:
  - Engaging with stakeholders surrounding each installation in order to improve missions, programs, facilities and operations on or affecting the military installations in the Commonwealth as well as participate in dialogue with community partners to create and expand upon the community impact each installation has in the municipality and surrounding cities and towns.
  - Developing, coordinating, and implementing actions in the areas of workforce training, infrastructure improvements, environmental and utility savings, housing and transportation to support the missions at military installations in Massachusetts.
  - Identifying steps the Commonwealth can take to remedy problem areas before preliminary recommendations from the federal government are adopted and missions are implemented.
  - Advising the Governor and Executive and Legislative Branch officials regarding the ongoing efforts by the U.S. Department of Defense to take actions impacting military installations in Massachusetts.

An Act Relative to Veterans’ Access, Livelihood, Opportunity, and Resources (2012, B-73)<sup>4</sup>

- Adds Veteran-owned businesses to the list of businesses that may receive special supports from the Commonwealth’s Supplier Diversity Office (SDO).
- Requires the Board of Higher Education to develop a written policy that requires public higher education institutions to develop policies regarding the granting of academic credit for a student’s prior or concurrent military occupation, training and coursework, and requires higher education institutions to designate a single point of contact for student Veterans.
- Adopts the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which streamlines the process for school-aged children of military personnel to transfer between school districts and states, and provides additional supports for these children.

---

<sup>3</sup> “Executive Order No. 541 ‘Establishing the Commonwealth’s Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force’” (B-7 & B-8).

<sup>4</sup> “Valor Act > Description” (C-3).

- Eliminates the \$2,500 cap that applies to years six and beyond of the property tax abatement for surviving spouses of soldiers, sailors and National Guard members killed as the result of an injury sustained or a disease contracted in a combat zone.
- Requires the RMV to, upon request, provide active duty service-members with license plates that include an emblem identifying the member's Armed Services branch.
  - Since January 2012, more than 11,000 veterans have received new licenses and IDs<sup>5</sup>
- Establishes a special commission to study and make recommendations relative to the training, certification, professional licensure, and accreditation of Veterans' benefits and services officers.

Executive Order No. 546 "Establishing the Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business Enterprise Program" (2013, B-11)<sup>6</sup>

- Establishes a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Program to oversee the inclusion of business enterprises owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans in all areas of state procurement contracting. The Executive Office for Administration and Finance (ANF) shall be responsible for the management, monitoring and enforcement of the program.
- Within two weeks, each Secretary and Agency Head must designate an individual to function as a "Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Liaison" who will be charged with ensuring their respective Agency or Secretariat's compliance with Executive Order No. 546.
- The ANF will issue a report annually within 120 days of the close of each fiscal year on the effectiveness of the program.

Other

- The Department of Higher Education and the Department of Veteran's Services released a plan called "Initiatives to Promote Veterans' Access to and Success in Higher Education" that outlines action steps to make all college campuses more veteran friendly.<sup>7</sup>
- Currently, the Administration is partnering with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce's "Boots to Business" program, which expands mentoring and networking opportunities and educates local employers about the skills service members gain in the military. Over a three year span the Administration received U.S. Department of Labor Grants for Homeless Veteran Reintegration and Training and Workforce Investment for implementation in sites across the Commonwealth. These grants provided training and placement assistance by

<sup>5</sup> "Supporting Our Servicemen and Women and Military Families: The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services" (B-153).

<sup>6</sup> Executive Order No. 546 "Establishing the Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business Enterprise Program" (B-12-B-14).

<sup>7</sup> "Supporting Our Servicemen and Women and Military Families: The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services" (B-152).

which over 960 veterans were placed in long-term position with competitive wages.<sup>8</sup>

- Veterans receive priority of service at each of the Department of Career Service's 33 One-Stop Career Centers, which have dedicated veterans' specific staff that served over 17,000 veterans last year. Additionally, Governor Patrick and Lt. Governor Murray established the Interagency Taskforce on Hiring Veterans, which released a plan to improve hiring policies, practices, and processes.<sup>9</sup>
- The Department of Veterans' Services, along with the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, created the first in the nation veteran web portal [www.MassVetsAdvisor.org](http://www.MassVetsAdvisor.org) which is a comprehensive easily searchable website outlining 400+ benefits and programs.<sup>10</sup>
- Lt. Governor Murray and the Department of Veterans' Services developed the Statewide Advocacy for Veterans Empowerment (SAVE) Program and the Statewide Housing Advocacy Reintegration and Prevention (SHARP) Program, which are both first in the nation state programs providing veteran peer to peer support, suicide prevention, and outreach to homeless combat veterans. Since its inception in February 2008, the SAVE team has reached more than 20,000 veterans and family members.<sup>11</sup>
- The MassHousing *Home for the Brave Program*, launched in July 2008, offers affordable, no-down payment mortgage financing for veterans of the U.S. Armed Services. Since the program began there have been dozens of loans issued to veterans for more than \$5 million in financial assistance.<sup>12</sup>
- The Women's Veterans Network has continued to expand its scope and programing in addition to its annual conference and Women Veterans Appreciation Day. The WVN also provided direct peer support and referrals to over 300 women veterans in 2012. Through the Veterans' Council, Lt. Governor Murray initiated the creation of the Governor's Task Force on Military Sexual Assault as a collaboration with state, federal and non-profit agencies to raise awareness of resources for survivors of military sexual assault and domestic violence.<sup>13</sup>
- Massachusetts provides 37 programs to assist veterans through the Department of Veterans Services, the most programs of any state in the nation.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> "Supporting Our Servicemen and Women and Military Families: The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services" (B-152).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid (B-153).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "Massachusetts Leads the Nation in Veteran/Military Benefit Programs and Services" (B-16).