

Appendix B: Legislation and Other Government Documents



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON 02133
(617) 725-4000

2007 APR 18 PM 12:37
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

By His Excellency

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 483

**ESTABLISHING A GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON VETERANS' SERVICES**

WHEREAS, the citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts established a constitution declaring that all people have "certain natural, essential and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties;" and

WHEREAS, the citizens of the Commonwealth were among the first to take up arms in defense of the aforementioned lives and liberties; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is extremely proud of its men and women who have continued to answer the nation's call to arms to preserve and defend its lives and liberties; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth recognizes that its veterans, particularly former prisoners of war and those with service-related disabilities, have special needs as a result of the hardship and sacrifices of military service; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth understands the immediate needs of veterans of the military engagements in the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the needs of all who have served in other conflicts; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has always been committed to advancing the opportunities of its veterans, to ensuring equal opportunity in public and private employment, and to developing services that will enable all of its veterans to maximize their participation in the social and economic life of the Commonwealth and the nation;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Deval L. Patrick, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution, Part 2, c. 2, § 1, Art. I, do hereby revoke Executive Order No. 363 and order that:

Section 1. There is hereby established the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services. The Council shall advise the Governor and the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Veterans' Services on issues relating to veterans of the Commonwealth.

Section 2. The Council shall review and assess state and federal statutes 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.

Section 3. The Council may call upon the Secretary of Veterans' Services to supply statistical data, program reports, and other information and assistance necessary to perform its work.

Section 4. The Council shall be chaired by the Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth and shall consist of not more than 35 members. Each member, other than the Chair, shall be appointed by the Governor and serve at his pleasure, without compensation, in an advisory capacity.

Section 5. The Council's members shall be selected by the Governor from the following:

American Gold Star Mothers, The American Legion, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve, Gold Star Wives of America, Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, Marine Corps League, Massachusetts Municipal Association, National League of Families, Organization of Afro-American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Provider of Homelessness Services, Provider of Outreach Services, Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and/or Iraqi Freedom, Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and two Veterans Service Officers.

The following officials, or their designees, shall serve as members of the Council:

The Secretaries of Elder Affairs, Health and Human Services, Housing and Economic Development, and Labor and Workforce Development; the Commissioners of Education, Mental Health and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission; the Chancellor of the Board of Higher Education or another official representing education and training issues; the Commandant of the Massachusetts Soldiers' Home in Chelsea and the Superintendent of the Holyoke Soldiers' Homes; the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard; and the Director of the Division of Career Services.

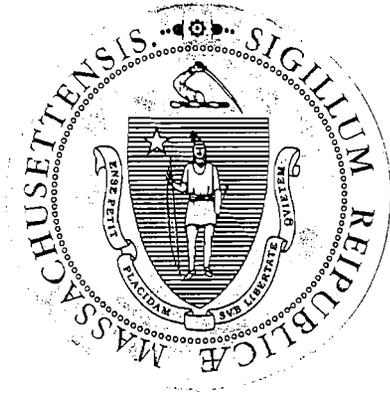
The Governor shall appoint such additional members as he deems appropriate.

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the United States Department of Labor will be invited to participate.

Section 6. The Council shall meet at least quarterly at the direction of the Chair and shall submit an annual report to the Governor and to the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Veterans' Services.

Section 7. The Chair may direct the Council to form subcommittees to focus on particular challenges facing veterans in the Commonwealth. The composition of each committee shall be determined by the Chair.

Section 8 . This Executive Order shall take effect immediately and shall continue in effect until amended, superseded or revoked by subsequent Executive Order.



Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston this 17th day of April in the year of our Lord two thousand and seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America two hundred and thirty-one.

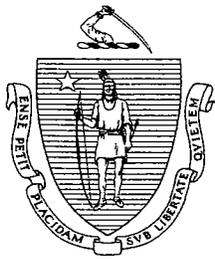
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DEVAL L. PATRICK, GOVERNOR
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Francis Galvin".

William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

GOD SAVE THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS



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DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

By His Excellency

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 541

**ESTABLISHING THE COMMONWEALTH'S MILITARY
ASSET AND SECURITY STRATEGY TASK FORCE**

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is extremely proud of its men and women who have continued to answer the nation's call to arms to preserve and defend its freedom and liberties;

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has always been committed to providing benefits and services for veterans and military families, while advancing and expanding opportunities for them in the areas of education, workforce development, employment, housing, and healthcare;

WHEREAS, the national security mission and value to America at each of the Commonwealth's military installations is key to public safety and regional economic development, as they serve as hubs and generators for local defense and aerospace related expenditures, jobs and investments;

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WHEREAS, defense related contracts from the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Homeland Security annually generate significant funds into the Commonwealth's manufacturing and business industries, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions to provide essential equipment, supplies and technical services in support of national defense operations;

WHEREAS, the defense industry is a vitally important component of the Commonwealth's economy;

WHEREAS, the most crucial and visible interactions between military installations and citizens occur locally in the base communities; and

WHEREAS, we must continue to build on what has historically made the Commonwealth an economic and societal leader by protecting and expanding our military installations and their missions by harnessing our intellectual capital, our tradition of innovation, the courage of entrepreneurship, the work-ethic of our people, and our commitment to public education;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Timothy P. Murray, Acting Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution, Part 2, c. 2, § 2, Art. III and Part 2, c. 2, § 1, Art. I, do hereby order as follows:

Section 1. There is hereby established the Commonwealth's Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force (hereinafter referred to as the "Task Force"). The purpose of the Task Force is to protect and expand missions, jobs and economic investments at and surrounding Massachusetts' federal and state military installations by:

1. Engaging with industry, nonprofit, municipal officials, and community members surrounding each installation in order to enhance, expand, add or otherwise improve missions, programs, facilities, and operations on or affecting the military installations in the Commonwealth. The Task Force

shall participate in dialogue with community partners in the vicinity of each military installation to create and expand upon the community impact each installation has in the municipality and surrounding cities and towns. These partners include but are not restricted to: chambers of commerce, business associations, education officials, workforce development officials, municipal officials, elected officials, and veteran and military family support agencies.

2. 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 the Commonwealth.
3. Identifying steps the Commonwealth can take to remedy problem areas before preliminary recommendations from the federal government are adopted and missions are implemented.
4. Advising the Governor and Executive and Legislative Branch officials regarding the ongoing efforts by the U.S. Department of Defense to close, realign, restructure, streamline, or otherwise take actions that would impact military installations located within the Commonwealth.

Section 2. The Task Force shall be chaired by the Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth and shall consist of the following members or their designees:

The Secretary of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security; the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard; the Commander of the Massachusetts Air National Guard; the Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development; the Secretary of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development; the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs; the Secretary of the Executive Office of Education; the Secretary of Administration and Finance; the Secretary of the Department of Transportation; the Chief Executive Officer of the

Massachusetts Port Authority; the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Services; the President and Chief Executive Officer of MassDevelopment; One (1) member from the Massachusetts State Senate, recommended by the Senate President; and One (1) member from the Massachusetts House of Representatives, recommended by the Speaker of the House.

To the extent permitted by law, every agency within the Executive Branch shall make all reasonable efforts to cooperate with the Task Force and to furnish all information and assistance requested by the Task Force.

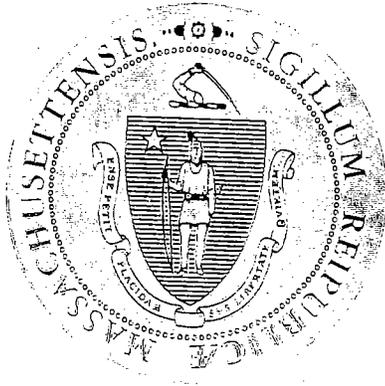
Section 3. The Lieutenant Governor and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor shall serve as the point of contact with federal, state, and local elected and non-elected officials to coordinate with government and the public and private sectors on this work.

Section 4. The Task Force shall meet at times and places to be determined by the Chair and shall establish working groups, meetings, forums and any other activity deemed necessary to carry out its mandate.

Section 5. The Task Force may call upon the University of Massachusetts to supply statistical data, program reports, and other information and assistance necessary to perform its work.

Section 6. This Executive Order shall take effect immediately and shall continue in effect until amended, superseded, or revoked by subsequent Executive Order.

Given at the Executive Chamber
in Boston this twenty-seventh day
of February in the year two
thousand and twelve, and of the
Independence of the United States
of America two hundred and thirty-
five.



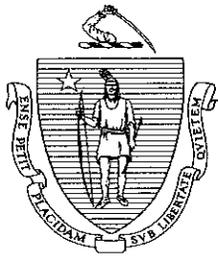
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TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
ACTING GOVERNOR
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Handwritten signature of William Francis Galvin in cursive.

WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN
Secretary of the Commonwealth

GOD SAVE THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS



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DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

By His Excellency

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 546

**ESTABLISHING THE SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN OWNED
BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts spends billions of dollars each year in state contracting activity, including contracts for construction services, design and professional services, and commodities and services; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts honors the extraordinary service rendered by all veterans but in particular veterans with disabilities incurred or aggravated in the line of duty during active service with the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been and continues to be a leader in providing equal access and opportunity to state contracting activity on the part of businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts seeks to establish a service-disabled veteran-owned business program to promote self-reliance among service-disabled veterans by offering such veterans who own and control business enterprises the opportunity to participate in state contracting activity; and

WHEREAS, in order to achieve this purpose and to assist such service-disabled veteran-owned businesses to participate in state contracting activity;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Deval L. Patrick, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution, Part 2, c. 2, § 1, Art. I, do hereby order as follows:

Section 1. This Executive Order shall apply to the procurement and purchase of construction services, design and professional services, and commodities and services by all state agencies of the Executive Department. As used in this order, the term "state agencies" means all executive offices, boards, commissions, departments, divisions, councils, bureaus, offices, and other agencies now existing and hereafter established.

Independent authorities, public institutions of higher education, elected officials, constitutional officers, the legislature and judiciary are encouraged to adopt policies and programs consistent with this Executive Order.

Section 2. It is the policy of the Commonwealth to promote access and equity of opportunity in state contracting; and, to that end, encourage the participation of businesses owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans in all areas of state procurement contracting, including contracts for construction, design and professional services, and commodities and services.

Section 3. There is hereby established a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Program ("Program"). The purpose of the Program is to oversee the inclusion of business enterprises owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans in all areas of state procurement contracting, including contracts for construction, design and professional services, and commodities and services.

Section 4. The Executive Office for Administration and Finance (“ANF”) shall be responsible for the overall management, monitoring and enforcement of the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Program established pursuant to this Executive Order, including the following:

- (a) The Secretary for Administration and Finance shall designate a staff member to be responsible for the development of Program policies and guidelines, which shall define program requirements, including participation goals, program development, coordination, monitoring, contract compliance including potential program violations, Agency coordination, and Agency enforcement activities;
- (b) In developing said Program policies and/or guidelines, the ANF staff member assigned to this task shall solicit input from state agencies prior to submitting the proposed Program policies and/or guidelines to the Secretary for Administration and Finance for final approval; and
- (c) Said Program policies and/or guidelines shall be submitted to the Secretary for Administration and Finance for approval within four weeks of adoption of this Order.

ANF shall devise a methodology to monitor the success of the program and measure the expenditures made by each state agency to eligible Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises.

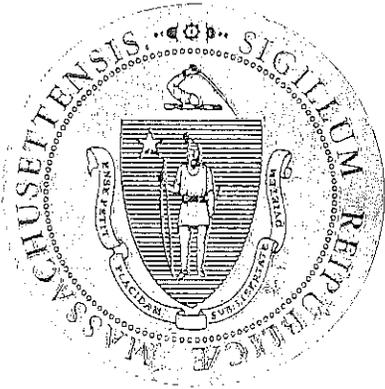
Section 5. Each Secretary and Agency Head must designate within two weeks of adoption of this Order an individual to function as a “Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Liaison” who will be charged with ensuring their respective Agency or Secretariat's compliance with this Executive Order and with supporting the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of this Program and the coordination of those functions within their Secretariat and Agency. The individual may be an existing employee who has other duties in addition to those required of the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Liaison.

Each Secretary, Agency Head and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Liaison may further designate such other individuals from among their agencies that are necessary to assist the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Liaison with its Agency's compliance with the requirements of this Order, including coordinating and communicating with and providing all requested reports and assistance as directed via Executive Office of Administration and Finance policy and program direction.

Section 6. All state agencies shall ensure that they input the required service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprise designation into the Commonwealth's accounting system, known as the Massachusetts Management, Accounting, and Reporting System ("MMARS" or its successor system), which will provide the capacity for a required service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprise designation. All state agencies shall ensure that they comply with guidance on this requirement to be issued by ANF in consultation with the Office of the Comptroller in order to assist the Executive Office for Administration and Finance in determining the total expenditures made by each state agency to service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprises for construction services, design and professional services, and commodities and services.

In addition, ANF shall issue a report annually within 120 days of the close of each fiscal year on the effectiveness of the program, including the total expenditures made to service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprises for construction services, design and professional services, and commodities and services, the number of eligible service-disabled veteran-owned business enterprises participating in the Program, and the outreach and training efforts of the Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Program.

Section 7. This Executive Order shall take effect immediately and shall continue in effect until amended, superseded, or revoked by subsequent Executive Order.



Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston this 8th day of March in the year of our Lord two thousand and thirteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America two hundred and thirty-seven.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deval Patrick", written over a horizontal line.

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Francis Galvin", written over a horizontal line.

WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN
Secretary of the Commonwealth

GOD SAVE THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts Leads the Nation in Veteran/Military Benefit Programs and Services

State Senator Michael F. Rush's office conducted a research study regarding veterans/military programs and services. The purpose of the report was to identify all programs and services that are available to veterans, military members, and their families in all 50 states. We give special thanks to Jeffrey Cameron for his help assembling this compilation, during his summer internship with Senator Rush.

We reviewed all 50 states' Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Veterans' Services websites to identify all programs and benefits that assist eligible veterans, their families and active military/reserve/national guard service members under existing state laws. This report is a broad based overview, not a scientific study.

We have broken down the report into **8** categories of benefits/programs:

Home – State Veterans Homes

Tax – Tax Exemptions, Fee Exemptions, Tax Credits, Tax Benefits, Tax Refunds

Financial – Bonuses, Unemployment Compensation, Allowances, Funds, Benefits, Grants, Trust Funds, Annuities, Loan Programs

Employment – Employment Rights, Employment Services, Licenses, Insurance, Medical benefits, Workers Compensation, Employment Assistance, Training, Credit for Service, Work Study, Civil Service, Workforce Investment, Job Protection

Education – G.I Bill, Scholarships, Financial Aid, Waivers, Educational Benefits, Loans, Diplomas, Testing Prep, Funds, Training, Academic Credit

Business – Licensing, Exemptions, Tax and Fee Waivers, Enterprise Opportunities, Tax Credits, Loan Programs, Business Networks, Finance and Technical Programs, Bank Programs,

Housing – Land/Purchase Discounts, Loans, Adapted/Specialized Housing, Homeownership Assistance, Finance Agencies, Intervention Programs, Transitional Housing

Other – Voting, Licenses, Dependents, Public Records, Recording Documents, Permits, Military Credit, Burial Benefits, Transportation, Cemeteries, Memorials, Permits, Waivers, Guardianship, ID Cards, Exemptions, Medals, Funeral Honors, Claims Assistance, Treatment, Outreach, Registrations, Counseling, Reintegration.

Immediately below this introductory text, you will find Table 1. Table 1 cross-references the numerical representation of veterans' benefits, by state, in each category. This table shows that Massachusetts contains the highest number of total programs/benefits available to veterans among all 50 states.

Below **Table 1** there is a second table that presents the benefits available, by state, in more detail. Within **Table 2**, you will find each benefit linked to a primary source veteran's benefits resource in that state.

We remain proud that Massachusetts stands at the nation's forefront of services for our heroes.

Office of Senator Mike Rush
Co-Chairman, Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs

State	Home	Tax	Financial	Employment	Education	Business	Housing	Other	Total
Massachusetts	2	4	8	9	6	1	2	5	37
Maryland	1	4	0	4	7	8	0	10	34
Alabama	3	3	3	2	1	3	0	14	29
Illinois	5	2	5	2	6	1	1	7	29
Georgia	1	6	1	5	4	0	0	12	29
Washington	3	1	6	4	3	0	1	10	28
Wisconsin	2	2	2	6	6	0	2	6	26
New Jersey	3	2	1	3	4	0	5	7	25
Missouri	6	2	5	2	1	1	1	6	24
Florida	7	2	0	1	5	0	0	8	23
California	5	1	2	2	2	2	0	8	22
Pennsylvania	6	1	2	1	7	0	1	3	21
South Carolina	3	5	1	1	1	0	1	9	21
Mississippi	2	2	0	4	2	0	1	9	20
Texas	8	0	1	0	1	0	3	7	20
Alaska	0	1	0	3	2	0	2	11	19
Louisiana	5	0	2	4	3	0	1	4	19
New Hampshire	1	1	4	3	2	0	0	7	18
New Mexico	0	4	0	1	5	0	0	8	18
New York	5	1	2	1	4	0	1	4	18
Delaware	1	1	1	1	3	0	0	10	17
South Dakota	1	4	1	0	5	0	0	6	17
Arizona	2	2	0	2	1	0	0	9	16
Kentucky	3	1	1	2	4	0	0	5	16
Maine	6	1	0	0	1	1	0	7	16
Colorado	5	1	1	2	3	0	0	3	15
Idaho	3	2	1	1	1	0	1	6	15
North Carolina	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	9	15
North Dakota	1	1	2	0	3	2	0	6	15
Ohio	2	0	3	0	4	0	0	5	14
Oklahoma	7	1	1	1	0	0	0	4	14
Oregon	1	1	0	3	3	0	0	6	14
Utah	2	1	1	0	4	0	0	6	14
Indiana	2	1	0	1	3	0	0	5	12
Kansas	1	0	4	1	1	0	1	4	12
Minnesota	5	0	1	1	2	0	0	3	12
Montana	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	5	12
Tennessee	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	6	12
Nevada	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	7	11
Arkansas	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	4	10
Iowa	1	1	2	0	3	0	1	2	10
Nebraska	4	0	1	0	3	0	0	2	10
Vermont	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	6	10
Connecticut	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	3	9
West Virginia	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	3	9
Michigan	2	0	1	1	2	0	0	2	8

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Virginia	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	7
Rhode Island	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	6
Wyoming	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	6
Hawaii	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	5

Table 2

<u>State</u>	<u>Home</u>	<u>Tax</u>	<u>Financial</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Business</u>	<u>Housing</u>	<u>Other</u>
<u>Alabama</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Bill Nichols State Veterans Home</u> •<u>Floyd E. "Tut" Fann State Veterans Home</u> •<u>William F. Green State Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Ad Valorem Tax Exemptions</u> •<u>Military Retiree Income Tax exemption</u> •<u>Military Combat Income Tax exemption</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Bonus for Southeast Asian War Prisoners</u> •<u>Exemption of Debts Incurred Pursuant to National Housing Act or Veterans benefits</u> •<u>Unemployment compensation</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Job Status and Reemployment Rights</u> •<u>Preference in State Classified Employment</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>G.I. Dependents' Scholarship Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Business and Occupation License Exemptions for Disabled Veterans</u> •<u>Business and Occupation License Exemptions for Veterans of WWII</u> •<u>Forfeiture of Franchise</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Armed Forces Voter Registration and Absentee Voting</u> •<u>Commitment of Incompetent Veterans</u> •<u>Executive, Attestation and Acknowledgment Certification</u> •<u>Fiduciaries in War Service</u> •<u>Fishing License</u> •<u>Guardianship for Veterans and Minor Dependents</u> •<u>Military Leave of Absence</u> •<u>Notice of Armed Forces Death</u> •<u>Official report of persons missing, ect.</u> •<u>Peace officers' credit for military service</u> •<u>Public Records</u> •<u>Recording of Discharges</u> •<u>Validation of Marriages</u>

<p><u>Alaska</u></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax Exemptions</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment preference rights</u> •<u>Veterans employment services</u> •<u>Affirmative Action Plan</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Free tuition for spouse or dependent of armed services member</u> •<u>High School Diplomas</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Land Discount/Purchase Preference</u> •<u>Veterans housing and residential loans</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Recording Veterans Report of Separation Form</u> •<u>Disabled Veterans Parking Permits</u> •<u>Veterans License Plates</u> •<u>Hunting and Fishing Licenses</u> •<u>State camping pass</u> •<u>Alaska Marine Highway Pass</u> •<u>Birthday Cards from the Governor</u> •<u>Governor's Advocacy Award</u> •<u>Military and Veterans Memorial Landmark Property</u> •<u>Wartime Letters-The Legacy Project</u> •<u>Military Credit towards state retirement</u>
<p><u>Arizona</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Pheonix State Veteran Home</u> •<u>Tucson State Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Tax and License Fee Exemptions (Page 6)</u> •<u>Vehicle License Tax and Registration Fees (Page 6)</u> 	<p>-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment Preferences (Page 4)</u> •<u>Professional and Occupational Licenses (Page 7)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Tuition and Fees- deferred payment (Page 3)</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Burial and Headstones (Page 3)</u> •<u>Absentee Voting in Elections (Page 3)</u> •<u>Recording of Discharges (Page 3)</u>

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Public record certification (Page 3)</u> •<u>Credit for Military Service for State Retirement Benefits (Page 4)</u> •<u>Hunting and Fishing Licenses (Page 6)</u> •<u>Arizona State Parks (Page 7)</u> •<u>Special License Plates (Page 7)</u> •<u>Transportation (Page 8)</u>
<u>Arkansas</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Little Rock Veterans Home</u> •<u>Fayetteville Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Homestead and Personal Property Tax Exemption</u> •<u>Gross Receipt of Tax exemption</u> •<u>Income Tax Exemption</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Free tuition for spouse, children of POW</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism</u> •<u>Hunting and Fishing Licenses</u> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery</u>
<u>California</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Yountville Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax Exemptions</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Calvet Farm and Home Loans</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment and Unemployment Insurance assistance</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>College tuition fee waivers for Veterans' Dependents</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Business License, Tax and Fee Waiver</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Disabled Veterans License Plates</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Barstow Veterans Home •Chula Vista Veterans Home •Lancaster Veterans Home •West Los Angeles Veterans Home 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Motor Vehicle Registration Fees Waived 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Veterans Preference in California Civil Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Non-Resident College fee waiver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Free License Plates •Veterans Claims Representation •Fishing and Hunting License •State Parks and Recreation Pass •State of California Veterans Cemetery •California Women Veterans Roster •The California Veterans Registry at the California Veterans Memorial
<u>Colorado</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Florence Veterans Home •Homelake Veterans Home •Fitzsimons Veterans Home •Rifle Veterans Home •Walsenburg Veterans Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Property Tax Exemption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Burial Allowance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employment Assistance •Employment Preference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Operation Recognition •Tuition Assistance •Tuition Assistance for Children of POWs, MIAs, or Disabled/Deceased ARNG 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Special License Plates •Medical Benefits •Hunting and Fishing Privileges
<u>Connecticut</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Rocky Hill Veterans Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Property Tax Exemptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Soldiers', Sailors', and Marines' Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employment Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Educational Benefit/Tuition Waivers •High School Diplomas and Veterans of WWII 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Vital Statistics •Vital Statistics

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Preference - Admission to Governor Bacon Health Center (Page 7)</u>
<u>Delaware</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Milford Veterans Home (Page 7)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Modifications to taxable income (Page 12)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Pension Benefits for Paraplegic Veterans (Page 8)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>State Employment Veterans Preference (Page 11)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Educational Benefits for Children of Deceased Veterans (Page 5)</u> •<u>Education Benefits for Active Members of the Delaware National Guard (Page 5)</u> •<u>High School Diploma for WWII Veterans (Page 6)</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans License Plates</u> •<u>Veterans Drivers' Licenses</u> •<u>Veteran's Cemetery</u> •<u>Vehicle License Tags</u> •<u>Special License Plates (Page 10)</u> •<u>Service Records</u> •<u>Retirement</u> •<u>Registration and Inspection of Motor Vehicles of Disabled Veterans (Page 10)</u> •<u>Reduced Fees for Disabled Veterans</u> •<u>Professional License</u>
<u>Florida</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Homestead Exemption (Permanent & Totally Disabled)</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans' Preference in Employment and Retention</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>High School Diploma-Korean War Veterans</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Permits/Fees (parking, tolls, building improvements)</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home</u> •<u>Clifford Chester Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home</u> •<u>Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home</u> •<u>Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home</u> •<u>Alexander Sandy Nininger State Veterans' Nursing Home</u> •<u>Robert H. Jenkins, Jr. Veterans' Domiciliary Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Homestead Exemption (10% to 100% BUT not permanent in nature)</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>High School Diploma-WWII Veterans</u> •<u>Tuition Deferment</u> •<u>Reduced Tuition for National Guard</u> •<u>Education for Children of Deceased or Disabled Florida Veterans</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>No Charge for Notary Services for Veterans (Page 6)</u> •<u>Necessary Documents to File Claims</u> •<u>Motor Vehicles Waiver</u> •<u>Motor Vehicle Military License Plates</u> •<u>Motor Fuel Service to Handicap</u> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>Indigent Veterans</u>
<u>Georgia</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Milledgeville Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Exemption from Homestead tax</u> •<u>Exemption from Sales tax on Vehicles</u> •<u>Ad Valorem Tax on Vehicles</u> •<u>Exemption from State Income Tax</u> •<u>Certificate of Exemption</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Injury and Death Benefits</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment Preference</u> •<u>Employment Assistance</u> •<u>Medical Benefits</u> •<u>Group Insurance</u> •<u>Workers Compensation</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Georgia HERO Scholarship (Page 10)</u> •<u>Tuition Assistance (Georgia Air National Guard)</u> •<u>The National Guard Service Cancelable Loan Fund (Page 12)</u> •<u>Georgia Military Scholarship (Page 10)</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>ID Cards</u> •<u>Hunting, Trapping and Fishing Licenses (Page 12)</u> •<u>Honorary Driver's License</u> •<u>Homeless Veterans Program</u> •<u>Handicapped Parking</u>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Abatement of State Incomes Taxes</u> 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Guardianship</u> •<u>Graves Registration</u> •<u>Free Death Certificates for Veterans (Page 6)</u> •<u>Free admission to State Fair</u> •<u>Disabled Veteran Motor Vehicle License Plate</u> •<u>Free Death Certificates for Veterans (Page 6)</u> •<u>Free admission to State Fair</u> - -
<u>Hawaii</u>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Tax Exemptions</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment and Re-employment</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Disabled Veteran Identification Card</u> •<u>Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery (Page 8)</u> •<u>Credited Military Service: Eligibility (Page 11)</u>
<u>Idaho</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Boise Veteran Home</u> •<u>Pocatello Veteran Home</u> •<u>Lewiston Veteran Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax reductions & exemptions</u> •<u>State Tax Exemption</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Emergency Grant</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment Preference</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Scholarships</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Copies of Statement of Service (Page 6)</u> •<u>Commission as a Notary Public (Page 9)</u> •<u>Certification or Discharge or Separation</u> •<u>Cemeteries</u> •<u>Cartage and Erection fees</u> •<u>Specially Adapted Housing</u>

<p><u>Illinois</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Prince Home at Manteno</u> •<u>Quincy Veterans Home</u> •<u>Manteno Veterans' Home</u> •<u>LaSalle Veterans' Home</u> •<u>Anna Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Tax Exemptions</u> •<u>Tax Exemption for Mobile Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>WWII bonus payment</u> •<u>Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf, and Global War on Terrorism (Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom) Conflict Bonus</u> •<u>Vietnam Veteran Survivors Compensation</u> •<u>POW Compensation</u> •<u>Global War on Terror Survivors Compensation</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>State Government s/Employment Preference</u> •<u>Jobs for Vets</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Educational Opportunities for Children (10-18 Yrs)</u> •<u>MIA/POW Scholarship</u> •<u>Veteran's Grant</u> •<u>Illinois National Guard Scholarship</u> •<u>Children of Veterans Scholarship</u> •<u>State Approving Agency</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Business tax credit incentive to hire Veterans</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Special Housing for Disabled Veterans</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Camping & Admission Fees</u> •<u>Burials</u> •<u>Burial in Connecticut's Veterans' Cemetery</u> •<u>Burial Benefits</u> •<u>Benefits Counseling (Page 8)</u> •<u>Benefits Assistance</u> •<u>Auctioneer and Book Agent Exemption for Veterans (Page 12)</u> •<u>Admission to State Parks</u>
<p><u>Indiana</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>West Lafayette Veterans Home</u> •<u>The Indiana Soldiers & Sailors Children's Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax Abatements</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment Assistance</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>High School Diploma Program for WWI, WWII, Korea and Vietnam Veterans</u> •<u>Remission of Fees (Free Tuition) for the Child/Children of a Disabled Veteran</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Golden Hoosier Passport</u> •<u>Indiana Veterans Memorial Cemetery</u>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Remission of Fees for Indiana Purple Heart Recipients</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Motor Vehicle License Plates</u> •<u>Peddlers, Vendors, or Hawkers License</u> •<u>Resident Veteran Hunting & Fishing License</u>
<u>Iowa</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Old Soldiers Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax Exemption</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Injured Veterans Grant</u> •<u>Trust Fund</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>National Guard Tuition Benefits</u> •<u>High School Diploma</u> •<u>Iowa Veterans Cemetery</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Homeownership Assistance</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Lifetime Hunting and Fishing License</u> •<u>License Plates</u>
<u>Kansas</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Kansas Veterans Home</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Dependents ' and Survivors' Benefits</u> •<u>Disability Benefits</u> •<u>Burial Benefits</u> •<u>Prescription Drug Coverage</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Education and Training</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Home Loans</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Health Care Assistance</u> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>Medals</u> •<u>DD form 214</u>
<u>Kentucky</u> <u>Y</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Eastern Kentucky Veterans Center</u> •<u>Thomson-Hood Veterans Center</u> •<u>Western Kentucky Veterans Center</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Military Retiree Pension Exclusion (Page 28)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Loan Program (Page 28)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Credit For Service in the U.S. Armed Forces (Page 21)</u> •<u>State Employment Preference Points for Veterans, Spouses, Widows, Widowers, And Parents (Page 21)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Tuition Waiver Program (Page 18)</u> •<u>High School Diplomas for WWII, Korea, and Vietnam Veterans (Page 17)</u> •<u>KY Educational Excellence Scholarship Awards (Page 18)</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Hunting, Trapping or Fishing License (Page 24)</u> •<u>License Plates (Page 24)</u> •<u>Homeless Veterans Programs (Page 51)</u>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Veterans May Complete High School Without Tuition (Page 17) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Funeral Honors (Page 43) •State Veterans Cemeteries (Page 47)
<p><u>Louisiana</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bossier Home •Jackson Home •Jennings Home •Monroe Home •Reserve Home 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Disability Compensation •Pension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Military Service Relief Act •Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Chapter 31) •State Civil Service •VA WORK STUDY PROGRAM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •LA NATIONAL GUARD TUITION EXEMPTION •LOUISIANA'S TITLE 29 DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE •SURVIVORS AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATION (CHAPTER 35) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •VA Guaranteed Home Loans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hunting and Fishing Privileges •Free Entrance to State Parks •License Plates •Burial Benefits
<p><u>Maine</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Augusta Home •Bangor Home •Caribou Home •Machias Home •Scarborough Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Property Tax Exemption 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Veterans Dependents Education Benefits Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Veterans Small Business Loan Program 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Maine Veterans' Memorial Cemetery System •Motor Vehicle Related Benefits and Services •Military Discharge Requests •Maine Resident Veteran Park Pass •Disabled Veterans Hunting and Fishing Licenses

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>•South Paris Home</u> 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>•Disabled Veterans Access to State Parks</u> <u>•Claims Representation</u>
<u>Maryland</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>•Charlotte Hall Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>•Property Tax Exemption</u> <u>•Military Retired Pay Income Tax Exemption</u> <u>•Vessel Excise Tax</u> <u>•Vehicle Registration Tax Credit</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>•Maryland Workforce Exchange</u> <u>•Veterans Workforce Investment Program</u> <u>•Local Veteran Employment Representative Program</u> <u>•Unemployment Insurance for Spouses of Military Employees (Page 12)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>•Maryland Higher Education Commission</u> <u>•Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Veterans Workforce Training Program</u> <u>•Maryland Disability and Higher Education Network</u> <u>•High School Diplomas</u> <u>•Scholarships for Veterans</u> <u>•University of Maryland Veterans Program Office</u> <u>•Morgan State University Veterans Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>•Veterans Establishing Businesses</u> <u>•Veteran-Owned Small Business Preference in Maryland</u> <u>•Military Personnel and Service-Disabled Veterans No-Interest Loan Program</u> <u>•Maryland Small Business Development Center Network</u> <u>•The Governor's Office of Minority Affairs</u> <u>•Reach Independence through Self-Employment</u> <u>•Maryland Financing Programs</u> <u>•Maryland Procurement Technical Assistance Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>•Burial Benefits</u> <u>•Claims Assistance</u> <u>•Health Care Assistance</u> <u>•License Plates</u> <u>•Obtaining Copies of DD-214</u> <u>•Absentee Voting (Page 8)</u> <u>•Game Hunting & Fishing Licenses (Page 9)</u> <u>•Admission to State Parks (Page 9)</u> <u>•Maryland Veterans Memorials (Page 14)</u> <u>•Maryland Veterans Cemeteries</u>

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Maryland Veterans Cemeteries (Page 14)</u>
<p><u>Massachusetts</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Soldiers' Home in Chelsea</u> Soldiers' Home in Holyoke 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax</u> •<u>Merit Plan</u> •<u>Motor Vehicle Tax</u> •<u>Relief from State and Federal Taxes</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Chapter 115 (Financial Assistance)</u> •<u>Annuities</u> •<u>Welcome Home Bonus</u> •<u>WWII Bonus</u> •<u>Korean War Bonus</u> •<u>Vietnam War Bonus</u> •<u>Persian Gulf War Bonus</u> •<u>Pension Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Job Protection (National Guard)</u> •<u>Civil Service Preference</u> •<u>Green Jobs and Training Grants</u> •<u>Vocational Rehabilitation</u> •<u>Employment Assistance</u> •<u>Veterans' Status and Preference</u> •<u>CORI Assistance</u> •<u>Tax Credit for</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Upward Bound</u> •<u>Veterans' Representatives at State Schools</u> •<u>Operation Recognition</u> •<u>Free SAT & ACT Test Prep Software for Military Service members and Their Families</u> •<u>Massachusetts Soldiers Legacy Fund</u> •<u>Scholarships for Family Members of Veterans</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Business Owners</u> •<u>Subsidized housing for homeless</u> •<u>Home for the Brave Home Loan Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>Motor Vehicle Registration Exemption for disabled Veterans</u> •<u>Motor vehicle registration exemption for ex-prisoners of war</u> •<u>PTSD treatments</u> •<u>State Veterans' Cemeteries</u> 	

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Special Hiring Authorities for Military Spouses and Family Members</u> 				
<p><u>Michigan</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Grand Rapids Home for Veterans</u> •<u>D.J. Jacobetti Home for Veterans</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Emergency Grant Program (Page 32)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Workforce Investment Act (WIA) – Michigan Works! Agencies (MWAs) (Page 10)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Tuition Grant Program (Page 8)</u> •<u>Children of Veterans' Tuition Grant</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax Credit for disabled Veterans (Page 24)</u> •<u>License Plates</u>
<p><u>Minnesota</u> <u>a</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Fergus Falls Veterans Home</u> •<u>Hastings Veterans Home</u> •<u>Luverne Veterans Home</u> •<u>Minneapolis Veterans Home</u> •<u>Silver Bay Veterans Home</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>State Soldiers Assistance Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Preference in Minnesota Public Employment</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program</u> •<u>Minnesota GI Bill</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery</u> •<u>Veteran Grave Markers</u> •<u>Claims and Outreach Assistance</u>
<p><u>Mississippi</u> <u>ppi</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Mississippi State Veterans Home in Kosciusko</u> •<u>Mississippi State Veterans Home of Oxford</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Ad Valorem Tax (Page 24)</u> •<u>Privilege Tax (Page 26)</u> 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment Preference (Page 25)</u> •<u>State Retirement (Page 26)</u> •<u>Re-employment (Page 26)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Educational Assistance (Page 25)</u> •<u>National Guard Benefits (Page 25)</u> 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>MISSISSIPPI VETERAN'S HOME PURCHASE BOARD (Page 9)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Documents (Page 24)</u> •<u>Hunting and Fishing Licenses (Page 25)</u> •<u>Motor Vehicle License Plates (Page 26)</u>

-	-	-	-	• <u>MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of EMPLOYMENT SECURITY (Page 10)</u>	-	-	-	• <u>MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT of ARCHIVES and HISTORY (Page 10)</u> • <u>MISSISSIPPI MILITARY DEPARTMENT (Page 11)</u> • <u>VA Medical Centers (Page 8)</u> • <u>STATE VETERANS AFFAIRS BOARD (Page 4)</u> • <u>State Veterans Claims Division (Page 5)</u> • <u>State VA Hospital Service Offices (Page 5)</u>
Missouri	• <u>Cameron Veterans Home</u> • <u>Cape Girardeau Veterans Home</u> • <u>Mexico Veterans Home</u> • <u>Mt. Vernon Veterans Home</u> • <u>St. Louis Veterans Home</u>	• <u>Property Tax Credits</u> • <u>Tax Exemption for AO Settlement Payments</u>	• <u>Compensation</u> • <u>Pension</u> • <u>Death Pension</u> • <u>Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)</u> • <u>Vietnam Veterans Survivor Grant Program</u>	• <u>Veterans' Preference with State of Missouri Employment</u> • <u>Priority for Qualified Veterans Employment</u>	• <u>Veterans' Education & Training On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship</u>	• <u>The Missouri Linked Deposit Program</u>	• <u>Home Loans</u>	• <u>Health Care Benefits</u> • <u>Personalized and Specialty License Plates</u> • <u>World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Medals and Medallions</u> • <u>Free Fishing & Hunting License</u> • <u>State Veterans Cemeteries</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Warrensburg Veterans Home</u> 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Service Officers</u>
<p><u>Montana</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Montana Veterans' Home (MVH)</u> •<u>Eastern Montana Veterans' Home (EMVH)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Reduced or no real property taxes</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>\$250.00 death payment - payment made by county of residence</u> •<u>\$70.00 grave marker payment - payment made by county of residence</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment assistance - local Montana Job Service office</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>College tuition waivers</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Free M.V.A.D. service officer assistance</u> •<u>Free recording and copies of discharge papers</u> •<u>Free license plate and vehicle registration waiver</u> •<u>Free fishing/hunting license</u> •<u>Burial in State Veterans Cemeteries</u>
<p><u>Nebraska</u> <u>a</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Grand Island Veterans' Home</u> •<u>Norfolk Veterans' Home</u> •<u>Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home</u> •<u>Western Nebraska Veterans' Home</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Nebraska Veterans Aid Fund (NVA)</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Operation Recognition</u> •<u>Reservist Tuition Credit</u> •<u>Waiver of Tuition</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Discharge Records (DD-214)</u> •<u>Grave Registration</u>
<p><u>Nevada</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Boulder City, Nevada, the Nevada State Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Tax Exemption</u> •<u>Disabled Veteran Tax Exemption</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Civil Service Preference</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Hunting and Fishing License</u> •<u>Veteran Cemetery Plots</u> •<u>Disabled Parking Privileges</u>

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Special Veterans License Plates</u> •<u>Documents</u> •<u>Recording Fees</u> •<u>Assistance with Claims</u>
<p><u>New Hampshire</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Home in Tilton, NH</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Tax Credits and Exemptions</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>WWII & Korea Bonus (Expired)</u> •<u>Persian Gulf War Bonus</u> •<u>Global War on Terrorism Bonus</u> •<u>Vietnam War Bonus</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>PREFERENCE OF RESIDENT LABORERS AND VETERANS</u> •<u>THE LIQUOR COMMISSION</u> •<u>Training</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Scholarships for Orphans of Veterans</u> •<u>Education Benefits</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Burial</u> •<u>Claims</u> •<u>License Fee Exemption</u> •<u>NH State Veteran Cemetery</u> •<u>Veterans' Relief</u> •<u>State Park Admission</u> •<u>Veterans License Plate</u>
<p><u>New Jersey</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>VETERANS MEMORIAL HOME - VINELAND</u> •<u>VETERANS MEMORIAL HOME - MENLO PARK</u> •<u>VETERANS MEMORIAL HOME - PARAMUS</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Property Tax Deduction/Exemption</u> •<u>New Jersey Property Tax Benefits</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>CATASTROPHIC ENTITLEMENT</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Preference for Civil Service and Pension Purposes</u> •<u>Veterans Status for Civil Service and Pension Plans</u> •<u>Other Civil Service Benefits for Veterans Preference</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>WAR ORPHANS TUITION ASSISTANCE</u> •<u>POW-MIA TUITION BENEFIT PROGRAM</u> •<u>VETERANS TUITION CREDIT PROGRAM</u> •<u>New Jersey National Guard Educational Benefits</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Stand Down Operation</u> •<u>Veterans Haven</u> •<u>NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency</u> •<u>HOMELESS INTERVENTION PROGRAM</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM</u> •<u>POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER & READJUSTMENT COUNSELING</u> •<u>Disabled Veteran License</u> •<u>Replacement of Medals</u>

							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>VA Guarantee and Home Loan</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>State Approving Agency</u> •<u>No Fee Automobile Registration</u> •<u>Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery</u>
<p><u>New Mexico</u></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans' Property Tax Exemption</u> •<u>Disabled Veterans' Property Tax Exemption</u> •<u>Exemption from Excise Taxes on Vehicle Purchases</u> •<u>Veterans' Service Organization Property Tax Exemption</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>New Mexico Personnel Office Veterans Hiring Preference</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Vietnam Veteran Scholarship</u> •<u>Children of Deceased Veterans</u> •<u>Military Children School Enrollment Priority</u> •<u>In-State Tuition for Veterans and Dependents of Active Duty/Title X Members</u> •<u>World War II and Korean Veterans High School Diploma</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Disabled Veterans Hunting and Fishing License</u> •<u>Reduced-Fee Hunting & Fishing License for Disabled Veterans</u> •<u>Hunting Fee Discount for Non-Resident Disabled Veterans Undergoing Rehabilitation</u> •<u>Temporary Hunting and Fishing License for Active-Duty Military Personnel</u> •<u>Free State Park Day Use Passes for Disabled Veterans</u> •<u>Free State Museum & Monument Admission for Disabled Veterans</u> 	

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Veterans' License Plates •Military Discharge Papers Protection
<p><u>New York</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •NYS Veterans Home at St. Albans •NYS Veterans Home •NYS Veterans' Home at Oxford •Long Island State Veterans Home •Montrose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Property Tax Exemption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Blind Annuity •Gold Star Parent Annuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Veteran Employees with Disabilities (55c) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Operation Recognition •Veterans' Tuition Award •Military Service Recognition Scholarship •Regents Awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Homes for Veterans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Licenses & Permits •E-Z Pass •Registration Fee Exemptions for Military Veterans •Supplemental Burial Allowance 	
<p><u>North Carolina</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fayetteville NC State Veterans Home •Salisbury NC State Veterans Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Income Tax Relief •Property Tax Relief 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employment Preference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Scholarships 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Guardians •Hunting and Fishing •DMV License Plates •Drivers Licenses •Handicapped Parking Privileges •Absentee Registration and Voting •Disabled Voters, Primary or General Elections •Records •Retirement Credit: Military Service, State and Participating Local Government Employees 	

<p><u>North Dakota</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>North Dakota Veterans Home Lisbon</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax Exemption</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Aid Loan Program</u> •<u>Hardship Assistance Grant</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Honorary High School Diploma</u> •<u>Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program</u> •<u>Tuition Waiver</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Entrepreneurship Boot camp for Veterans with Disabilities</u> •<u>North Dakota Small Business Administration</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Burial and Memorial Benefits</u> •<u>North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council</u> •<u>Veterans Cemetery</u> •<u>Special License Plates</u> •<u>Transportation System</u> •<u>ND State Park Fees</u>
<p><u>Ohio</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Georgetown Home</u> •<u>Sandusky Home</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Compensation & Claims</u> •<u>Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)</u> •<u>Ohio Heroes Program</u> 	<p>-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Ohio War Orphans Scholarship</u> •<u>High School Diploma</u> •<u>Ohio Safety Officers College Memorial Fund</u> •<u>Ohio National Guard Scholarship Program</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Burial / Cemeteries</u> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>Medals & Awards</u> •<u>Records</u> •<u>Recreational Benefits</u>
<p><u>Oklahoma</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ardmore</u> • <u>Claremore</u> • <u>Clinton</u> • <u>Lawton</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Tax Exemption</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Emergency/ Disaster Financial Assistance Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Special Disabled Veterans Employment</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Free hunting and fishing permit</u> •<u>Free admission to state owned and operated parks and museums</u> •<u>Reduced Fee auto tags</u> •<u>The Claims and Benefits Division</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Norman</u> • <u>Sulphur</u> • <u>Talihina</u> 							
<u>Oregon</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Columbia Gorge Oregon Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Property Tax Exemption for Disabled War Veterans</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Unemployment Compensation</u> • <u>Disabled Veterans' and Veteran Employment Representatives</u> • <u>Veterans' Preference Points</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>High School Diploma</u> • <u>Veterans' Dependent Tuition Waiver</u> • <u>Voyager Aid Program for Oregon National Guard and Reserve</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Permanent Vehicle Registration Fee for Disabled Veterans</u> • <u>Military Veteran Recognition License Plate Program</u> • <u>Veteran Designation on Oregon Driver Licenses</u> • <u>State Parks Use Permit</u> • <u>Hunting and Fishing Licenses (Permanent Combination License)</u> • <u>Documents</u>
<u>Pennsylvania</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Delaware Valley Veterans Home</u> • <u>Gino J. Merli Veterans Center</u> • <u>Hollidaysburg Veterans Home</u> • <u>Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home</u> • <u>Southeastern Veterans Center</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Disabled Veterans Real Estate Tax Exemption Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Blind Veterans Pension</u> • <u>Paralyzed Veterans Pension</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Veterans' Preference on Classified Service Employment Lists</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Educational Gratuity Program</u> • <u>Pennsylvania National Guard Education Assistance Program</u> • <u>Children of POW/MIA Soldiers</u> • <u>Postsecondary Educational Gratuity Program</u> • <u>Pennsylvania State Grant Program</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency Loans</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Free Fishing Licenses</u> • <u>Burial Allowance</u> • <u>DD Form 214/DD Form 215 Program</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Southwestern Veterans Center</u> 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Division of Veterans/Military Education Pennsylvania State Approving Agency</u> •<u>Operation Recognition</u> 		
<u>Rhode Island</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Mount Hope Bay Veterans Home</u> 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Rhode Island National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program (Page 20)</u> •<u>Rhode Island National Guard State Tuition Exemption program (Page 21)</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>RI Veterans Memorial Cemetery</u> •<u>License Plates (Page 56)</u> •<u>Hunting and Fishing Licenses (Page 58)</u>
<u>South Carolina</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>E. Roy Stone, Jr. Veterans Pavilion</u> •<u>Veterans' Victory House</u> •<u>Richard M. Campbell Veterans Nursing Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>ADMISSIONS TAX EXEMPTION</u> •<u>INCOME TAX EXEMPTION ON RETIREMENT PAY</u> •<u>PROPERTY TAXES - HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION</u> •<u>PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION</u> •<u>TAX EXEMPTION FOR COMPENSATION, PENSION, DISABILITY RETIREMENT PAY, AND VA PAYMENTS</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>SOUTH CAROLINA MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF FUND</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>VETERANS REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>FREE TUITION/EDUCATION ASSISTANCE (FREE TUITION FOR CERTAIN VETERAN'S CHILDREN)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>CREDIT OF STATE RETIREMENT FOR MILITARY SERVICE</u> •<u>FREE HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES</u> •<u>STATE PARKS BENEFIT FOR TOTALLY DISABLED PERSONS</u> •<u>SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES</u> •<u>PRESENTATION OF THE STATE FLAG TO FAMILIES OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH</u>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>TAX EXEMPTION FOR COMPENSATION, PENSION, DISABILITY RETIREMENT PAY, AND VA PAYMENTS</u> 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>PRESENTATION OF THE STATE FLAG TO FAMILIES OF DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD</u> •<u>RECORDING OF DISCHARGES</u> •<u>PARKING FEE EXEMPTION</u> •<u>MARRIAGE, BIRTH, DEATH AND DIVORCE VERIFICATION</u> •<u>ACTIVE DUTY PAY RELEVANT TO THE S.C. DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE AND TAXATION</u>
<p><u>South Dakota</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax Exemption for Veterans and Their Widow or Widower</u> •<u>Totally Disabled Veterans</u> •<u>Property Tax Refund for Aged and Disabled Persons</u> •<u>Sales Tax Refund for Certain</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS BONUS</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Free Tuition for Veterans</u> •<u>Free Tuition for Children of Veterans Who Die During Service</u> •<u>Free Tuition for Dependents of POW's and MIA's</u> •<u>Reduced Tuition for South</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Free Certified Copies of Veterans Records</u> •<u>Burial Allowance for Veterans, Wives or Widows</u> •<u>SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES</u> •<u>GAME AND FISH LICENSES</u>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Free Tuition to Child or Spouse of South Dakota National Guard member Disabled or Deceased in the Line of Duty 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •REDUCE D FEES AND FREE ADMISSION FOR QUALIFYING VETERANS TO ANY SOUTH DAKOTA STATE PARK •Disabled Hunter Permit
<p><u>Tennessee</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •State Veterans Homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Property tax relief for Service Connected Disability •Motor vehicle privilege tax exemption 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Veterans preference in State employment •Credit for military service in State employment •Reemployment rights of public employees 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •State Veterans Cemeteries •Free license plates •Free hunting and fishing licenses •Parking privileges •Registration of discharges by county registrar at no fee •TN Dept of Environment and Conservation discount/fee waivers
<p><u>Texas</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ussery-Roan Veterans Home in Amarillo •Lamun-Lusk-Sanchez Veterans Home in Big Spring •Clyde W. Coper Veterans Home in Bonham 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Veterans Loans 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hazlewood Act 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Land Loans •Veterans Housing Assistance Program •Renovation Loans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Texas state Cemetery •Fishing and Hunting Licenses •Specialty License Plates

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Ambrosio Guillen Veterans Home in El Paso</u> •<u>Frank M. Tejada Veterans Home in Floresville</u> •<u>Alfredo Gonzalez Veterans Home in McAllen</u> •<u>William R. Courtney Veterans Home in Temple</u> •<u>The Veterans Home in Tyler</u> 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Concealed Handgun License Fees</u> •<u>Driver License</u> •<u>Parking Placards and Registration</u> •<u>State Park Admission</u>
Utah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Salt Lake Veterans Home</u> •<u>Ogden Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Disabled Veteran Property Tax Abatement</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Purple Heart Fee Exemption</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Purple Heart Tuition Waiver</u> •<u>Scott B Lundell Tuition Waiver</u> •<u>Honorary High School Diplomas</u> •<u>Veterans Upward Bound</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans License Plates</u> •<u>Free Use of Armories</u> •<u>Fishing License Privileges</u> •<u>Special Fun Tags</u> •<u>America the Beautiful Pass</u> •<u>Bus/Train Reduced Fare Cards</u>
Vermont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Bennington Veterans Home</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Financial Assistance</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Employment and Training Assistance</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>High School Diplomas for WWII, Korean, and Vietnam Veterans</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Vermont Medals</u> •<u>Hunting and Fishing Licenses; Green Mountain Pass</u> •<u>Vermont Veterans License Plates</u> •<u>Vermont Veterans Memorial Cemetery</u>

								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Discharge Records •Veteran Advocacy
<u>Virginia</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Virginia Veterans Care Center</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Virginia Employment Commission</u> •<u>Department of Human Resource Management - Veteran Outreach Services</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program</u> •<u>Honorary Diplomas</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries</u>
<u>Washington</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>WA SOLDIERS HOME</u> •<u>WASHINGTON VETERANS HOME</u> •<u>SPOKANE VETERANS HOME</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Property Tax Relief</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>VETERANS ESTATE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM</u> •<u>County Veterans Assistance Fund</u> •<u>Spina Bifida Allowance</u> •<u>Dependency and Indemnity Compensation</u> •<u>Defenders' Fund</u> •<u>Individual Grant Program</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veteran's Employment Preference Points</u> •<u>Military Retirement Credit</u> •<u>Employment Preference</u> •<u>Reemployment and Layoff Rights</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>OPERATION RECOGNITION</u> •<u>Veteran Waiver</u> •<u>Dependents Waiver</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans Homeless Services and Transitional Housing</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>Returning Service Members OEF/OIF/ONE</u> •<u>Burial Benefits</u> •<u>Motor Vehicle Licenses</u> •<u>Reduced Fishing/Hunting License</u> •<u>State and Federal Park Passes</u> •<u>Reduced Public Transportation Fees</u> •<u>Veterans Records</u> •<u>The Veterans Conservation Corps</u> •<u>PTSD COUNSELING SERVICES</u>
<u>West Virginia</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Village of Barboursville Veterans Home</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>VETERANS BONUS</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>VETERANS PREFERENCE</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>STATE WAR ORPHANS EDUCATION</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>AGENT ORANGE PROGRAM</u>

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>VETERANS RE-EDUCATION ACT FUND</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>FREE LICENSE</u> •<u>FREE HUNTING AND FISHING PRIVILEGES</u>
<p><u>Wisconsin</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Wisconsin Veterans Home at King</u> •<u>Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit</u> •<u>Wisconsin Individual Income Taxes</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Assistance to Needy Veterans and Family Members</u> •<u>Personal Loan</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veterans as Apprentices</u> •<u>Veterans Hiring Preference Information</u> •<u>Employment Assistance Opportunities</u> •<u>Veterans Leaving Active Duty</u> •<u>Veterans Employment Representatives</u> •<u>Job Retraining Grants</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Academic Credit for Military Experience</u> •<u>Tuition Residency for Wisconsin Veterans</u> •<u>Wisconsin G.I. Bill Tuition Remission Program</u> •<u>VetEd Reimbursement Grant</u> •<u>Personal Loan Program (PLP)</u> •<u>High School Diplomas</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Home Improvement Loan</u> •<u>Home Loan</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Hunting & Fishing Licenses</u> •<u>Transportation to VA Medical Appointments</u> •<u>License Plates</u> •<u>Free Access to State Parks and Trails</u> •<u>Review of Military Discharge</u> •<u>Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemeteries</u>
<p><u>Wyoming</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Veteran's Home of Wyoming</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Wyoming Veteran's Property Tax Exemption</u> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Free Tuition for War Veterans and Surviving Dependents</u> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<u>Wyoming Veteran's License Plates</u> •<u>Hunting, Fishing, and Parks</u> •<u>Oregon Trail State Veterans Cemetery</u>

***Disclaimer:** This information was gathered from current websites associated with veteran and military issues. It does not reflect any new, proposed, or enacted laws that have yet to be updated or disclosed on the websites listed in the resource section.

Resources

General Sources:

Military.com
Veteransinfo.org
Va.gov

All 50 States Veterans Affairs Websites:

<http://www.va.state.al.us/>
<http://veterans.alaska.gov/>
<http://www.azdvs.gov/Default.aspx>
<http://www.veterans.arkansas.gov/index.html>
<http://www.calvet.ca.gov/Default.aspx>
<http://www.dmva.state.co.us/>
<http://www.ct.gov/ctva/site/default.asp>
<http://veteransaffairs.delaware.gov/>
<http://www.floridavets.org/index.asp>
<http://sdvs.georgia.gov/portal/site/SDVS/menuitem.ccad5b319ea5163fec2ea133da1020a0/?vqnextoid=5b15de1492fb7210VgnVCM100000bf01020aRCRD>
<http://hawaii.gov/dod/>
<http://www.veterans.idaho.gov/index.php/benefits-a-services>
<http://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/Pages/default.aspx>
<http://www.in.gov/dva/index.htm>
<https://va.iowa.gov/>
<http://www.kcva.org/>
<http://veterans.ky.gov/>
<http://www.vetaffairs.la.gov/>
<http://www.maine.gov/dvem/bvs/>
<http://www.mdva.state.md.us/>
<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=veteranshomepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Eveterans>
<http://www.michigan.gov/dmva/0,1607,7-126-2362---,00.html>
<http://www.mdva.state.mn.us/>
<http://www.vab.ms.gov/>
<http://www.mvc.dps.mo.gov/>
<http://dma.mt.gov/mvad/functions/state.asp>
<http://www.vets.state.ne.us/>
http://www.veterans.nv.gov/veterans_home.html
<http://www.nh.gov/nhveterans/>
<http://www.state.nj.us/military/veterans/>
<http://www.dvs.state.nm.us/>
<http://www.veterans.ny.gov/>
<http://www.doa.state.nc.us/vets/>
<http://www.nd.gov/veterans/>
<http://dvs.ohio.gov/>
<http://www.ok.gov/ODVA/>
<http://www.oregon.gov/ODVA/>
http://www.dmva.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/veterans_affairs/7179
<http://www.dhs.ri.gov/Veterans/VeteransServices/tabid/307/Default.aspx>

<http://www.govoepp.state.sc.us/va/benefits.html>

<http://mva.sd.gov/default.html>

<http://www.tn.gov/veteran/>

<http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/>

<http://veterans.utah.gov/>

<http://veterans.vermont.gov/home>

<http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/>

<http://www.dva.wa.gov/>

<http://www.veterans.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://dva.state.wi.us/>

<https://www.wy.ngb.army.mil/benefits/>



Massachusetts Student Veteran Advisory Board

Annual Report • 2013



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2013: A Strong Beginning

It was less than a year ago that I was given the honor and responsibility of creating a Student Veteran Advisory Board and determining how the Commonwealth could best support veterans' education. In that short time, we have assembled a Board of dedicated student veterans who are passionate about serving their peers. We have canvassed our state and listened to student veterans, learning about both the successes and challenges they are having negotiating higher education. We have engaged faculty and administrators at several institutions, and discussed their desires and challenges with supporting veterans. We have developed partnerships between government organizations and NGOs, including our own MA Department of Veteran Services, the MA Department of Higher Education, and the Student Veterans of America. We have built a network of dozens of other individuals and organizations dedicated to supporting student veterans both in our state and across the nation.

What I observed on our listening tour was very encouraging. I saw many cases of student veterans self-organizing and creating student vet organizations on campus. I saw colleges and universities stepping up and offering tremendous support for their veterans. I also met countless individuals who believed in the importance of educating our veterans and were willing to contribute whatever they could to the cause.

There is much to be proud of, but there is also much work to be done. Programs, services, and student veteran organizations on campus primarily operate independently rather than collaboratively. Finding the veterans who need the most support – those that are not already part of any program or network – is very difficult. There is tremendous inconsistency in the level of support veterans receive campus to campus, and even department to department in larger universities.

Luckily we veterans are a group that is used to facing challenges head on. For over a decade we have been serving on multiple fronts, answering our country's call to duty. That dedication to duty and devotion to service does not end once we leave the military. Our core values remain with us, and I am constantly seeing veterans across the state applying them in the classroom.

What keeps me committed to this cause is that every time I visit a school and interact with student veterans, I am being introduced to our next generation of leaders. The future teachers, business owners, civil servants, and community leaders are the present generation of veterans in the classroom; and as over a decade of conflict continues to wind down, it is now time for us to fulfill *our* duty to support them and ensure their success in higher education.

Erik DeGiorgi
Coordinator
USMC 01-05



2013 Student Veteran Advisory Board Overview

The Massachusetts Student Veteran Advisory Board (SVAB), a sub-committee of the Governor's Advisory Council on Veteran Services, works to develop and implement programs and infrastructure to support the greater student veteran population across the Commonwealth. The Board, comprised of student veterans and higher education faculty, is dedicated to making the transition from military to student life seamless for service-members returning to Massachusetts. By helping student veterans to self-organize, schools to understand and meet the unique needs of incoming veterans, and government and private organizations to build tools that support the transition from military service to academic life to the workforce, we aim to make Massachusetts the gold standard for our nation when it comes to educating veterans.

Erik DeGiorgi – Coordinator

Erik DeGiorgi grew up on Boston's South Shore before joining the Marine Corps in 2001. During his four year enlistment, Erik served as a ceremonial guard at Marine Barracks 8th and I, trained with Thai and Korean special forces, attended small unit leadership school in Okinawa, Japan, and was a patrol leader on dozens of extended missions in remote parts of Afghanistan's Hindu Kush.

After returning to the US, Erik co-founded MediaVue Systems, a computer hardware manufacturer that services the digital advertising and information industry. Since its founding in 2007, mediaVue has deployed product in over 50 countries and developed a customer base that includes Uniqlo, Marks & Spencer, Panasonic, NEC, Disney, Massport and WGBH.

While pursuing his bachelor's degree, Erik studied at Lesley University, The Art Institute of Boston, and MIT. Erik developed an interdisciplinary course-load with a focus on systems design. Recently, Erik was one of 15 emerging leaders chosen by the Small Business Administration for a seven month intensive MBA program hosted by Harvard Business School.

In his personal life, Erik has spent several years as a mentor in high school engineering and robotics programs, including F.I.R.S.T. and Battlebots IQ. Erik is also a member of OrigaMIT, the MIT origami club and an avid board gamer and science fiction fan. It is a combination of Erik's focus on engineering, design, and entrepreneurship as well as a strong commitment to egalitarianism that led Erik to co-found semper fiber in 2012. Semper Fiber's mission is to stimulate the next generation of young innovators and catalyze the creation of social, cultural, and economic capital.

David Vacchi – Public Chair

David Vacchi retired from the US Army as a lieutenant colonel in 2009 after a 20-year active duty career. Commissioned in 1988 from Purdue University with a degree in leadership, David served in a myriad of leadership positions culminating as the commander of the Army ROTC program at UMass-Amherst then as the Director of Fires for the Eighth United States Army in Korea. Among his unique positions during his career are service as the US Embassy Liaison Officer for a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) response task force in Kuwait City from 2002-2003 and as the operations officer for a task force located in the north Baghdad suburbs in the Sunni Triangle during the first year of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

David's awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star among numerous other awards. David recently completed coursework for a doctorate in Educational Policy and Leadership at the University of Massachusetts Amherst where his research focus is on the college experiences of student veterans. His recent research includes explorations of factors of veteran-friendliness on campus and the factors that affect student veteran successful degree attainment. David serves as the national



Research and Publications representative for the Veterans Knowledge Community of NASPA (Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education). David is among the nation's leaders in student veteran research and theory, and had several academic publications forthcoming. Upon completion of his dissertation in May 2014, David plans to enter the professoriate and continue his research on student veterans. David lives in Belchertown with his wife of 20 years, Susan, and their two children, Ella and Brian.

Joe Goodwin – Private Chair

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, having just graduated from Harvard College, Joe enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant combat arms officer and joined the 1st Armored Division in Iraq. He spent more than a year leading a platoon of 30 soldiers patrolling the streets of Baghdad, rebuilding the country's infrastructure and working to contain growing violence. Joe received a Bronze Star for his exemplary performance in combat.

Upon returning from Iraq, Joe began a job with General Electric Co.'s steam and wind turbine divisions, working as a leader on both the factory floor and on the finance and strategic side to build renewable, clean energy technology. In 2008, Joe was recalled to serve in Afghanistan where he spent a year serving as a special advisor to the NATO Director of Strategic Communications. In that role, Joe's duties included investigating civilian casualties, helping the Army compensate victims and their families, and crafting solutions to avert future tragedies. After returning from Afghanistan, Joe enrolled at Suffolk University Law School and then transferred to Harvard Law School. Joe is recently married to Victoria Bonney. His father, Richard, was advisor to Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, and his mother, Doris, is a Pulitzer Prize winning author and presidential historian.

Diane O'Hearn

For over 25 years, Diane has worked in higher education both in the classroom and in administrative roles at institutions such as UMass/Amherst, Harvard University, Holyoke Community College, UC Berkeley, Patten University, Ohlone College and Greenfield Community College. Diane earned both her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Master's degree in Human Resource Development from American International College and is currently a tenured Academic Coordinator at Greenfield Community College (GCC).

In 2009, Diane was instrumental in launching the GCC student veteran network. The organization, more commonly referred to as VetNet, has promoted student veteran awareness and best practices on campus and throughout the community. Today, GCC has an active veterans' center that represents a cornerstone for the advancement of student veteran access and success on campus.

Diane's ongoing commitment to veterans' education and training is inspired by the increasing number of students who choose to pursue their education after having served in the United States armed forces. Working to build a culture that recognizes the leadership that student veterans bring to campus, Diane actively supports the greater GCC community as it develops a comprehensive Veterans Center and helps promote a seamless transition for student veterans from active service to civilian life as a college student.

Pam Dehollander

Pamela DeHollander's military service began with her selection as the Delayed Entry Program Leader while awaiting entry into basic training. During her Navy career, she deployed to the Arabian Gulf twice, earned both her Air Warfare and Surface Warfare pins, was meritoriously promoted, led several special project teams and home ported the USS Ronald Reagan to San Diego, CA. Throughout her 8 year career, Pamela garnered several Sailor of the Quarter and Year awards at multiple commands.



Currently, Pamela attends UMass Lowell and is pursuing her undergraduate degree in Business Administration. She expects to continue on to a career in corporate communications or the political arena. Pamela serves within the veterans' community at UMass Lowell as an officer of the Student Veteran Organization. This past year, she represented the university at the Annual Student Veteran Association conference in Orlando, Florida, initiated steps to establish a national veteran fraternity chapter at UMass Lowell. She will also present at the 2013 National Conference for College Women Student Leaders on Leading as a Woman: Lessons Earned in the Military.

Her selection to the Massachusetts Student Advisory Board enables Pamela to ensure that student veteran voices are heard in the Commonwealth and she welcomes the opportunity to continue her leadership commitment to veteran issues.

Michael A. Trudeau

Michael Trudeau enlisted in the U.S. Navy Submarine Force in 2004. After completing the rigorous Enlisted Submarine School in New London, CT, Trudeau was stationed to the USS Columbus (SSN-762). Columbus was in Bremerton WA at the time for a dry dock period but then moved to Pearl Harbor, HI in 2006. Columbus then went on a Western Pacific Deployment with port calls in Okinawa, Tokyo, Nagasaki, Saipan, and Guam. In 2009 the Columbus received the coveted Arleigh Burke Fleet Trophy, the Battle Excellence award, and the Damage Control Excellence Award just prior to Michael Trudeau's departure from the Navy.

After coming home, Trudeau enrolled at Bunker Hill Community College for one year utilizing his post 9-11 G.I. Bill. He then transferred to Northeastern University to study Political Science, International Affairs, and Economics and partake in the Universities CO-OP program. On CO-OP Trudeau had the opportunity to be a Research Assistant at the Kostas Institute for Homeland Security. Trudeau Graduated in 2013

Trudeau became involved in the Student Veteran Organization where he acted as Secretary until he assumed the position on President in May 2012. As a result of his leadership, Trudeau and his officers were invited to the Student Veterans of America National Conference to present their 'Business Plan'. As a result the SVA awarded the Student Veterans Organization at Northeastern University, 'Chapter of the Year' out of 700 chapter nationally. Trudeau was also asked to be a Board Member of the MA Student Veteran Advisory Board where he has been an active member since September 2012 where he continues to advocate for veterans issues.



Student Veteran Advisory Board Establishment & Goals

In 2012, the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services and Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services commissioned the Student Veteran Advisory Board to explore the experiences of student veterans across the Commonwealth. The idea was to establish a cohort of veterans who could interact with and learn directly from their student veteran peers about their successes and challenges. Our initial goals for the first year were:

- Establish a board of student veterans that represented the broader student veteran population enrolled in both public and private institutions of higher learning across the Commonwealth.
- Understand the experiences of student veterans in Massachusetts through an ongoing series of listening tour/focus groups to ensure that the perspectives of student veterans guide policy and program development.
- Identify ways in which the Commonwealth can facilitate the successful college endeavors of student veterans through programs, policies, and initiatives focused on creating synergy at the state level, rather than performing functions intended for the VA or academic institutions.
- Generate an annual report that illustrates findings from the listening tour and offers recommendations to policy makers regarding how the Commonwealth can support veteran education.
- Organize and host an event focused on veteran education that brings together service providers and schools.

The first year was an aggressive step forward in leveraging resources from the Commonwealth to support student veterans. In addition to conducting our first listening tour, several goals and programmatic events were planned at the state level. The first state sponsored veteran education symposium, the Student Veteran Appreciation Day (SVAD) was organized and held on May 11th 2013. The SVAD combined an exhibition hall, where public and private service providers, along with schools from across the Commonwealth connected with prospective and current student veterans. Workshops were held that focused on arming student veterans with the knowledge they needed to succeed in higher education.

This year the MA Department of Veteran Services strengthened its relationship with the MA Department of Higher Education in order to collaborate on the shared cause of veteran education. The SVAB also established a relationship with the Student Veterans of America (SVA), and have agreed to collaborate on the matters of tracking veteran graduation and establishing best practices at schools.

The 2013-14 academic year will solidify the SVAB as an action and results-oriented organization intended to enhance the success of student veterans across the Commonwealth. Data collection through a listening tour will continue to maintain open dialogue and a diversity of feedback from new campuses. Strengthening infrastructure and developing Commonwealth programs and services to help institutions meet their goals of helping student veterans will begin. By the end of this academic year, the Commonwealth endeavors to be positioned to implement numerous programs intended to support the efforts of all campuses as they build and sustain programs for student veterans. By the year 2015, Massachusetts aspires to be the recognized national leader on veteran education initiatives.

By the year 2023, Massachusetts aspires to be the national leader in research and best practices for student veterans in higher education. We must anticipate a new era of student that may mirror the



period between 1980 and 2008. We must ensure we do not repeat the near-total oversight of student veteran research and scholarly literature during these years. Having the foresight to continue to track the performance and experiences of student veterans in higher education will bridge the intellectual gap in ways that higher education failed to do so between 1975 and 2008. Documenting best practices and preserving veterans' services staff and spaces, where practical will be critical to the sustainability of future programs and supporting future generations of student veterans within the Commonwealth. The result of having this foresight will be an easier start up when an inevitable future surge of student veterans begins after the next major military conflict, which occurs every twenty to thirty years in our nation's history.



2013 Recommendation Summary

1. Establish a veteran-specific support staff position at each state institution of higher learning, separate from the person employed, or partially employed, by the VA for benefits certification.
2. Help public institutions create office space for one-on-one counseling of student veterans and a lounge for student veterans to connect with each other informally.
3. Develop recommendations for first-year veteran cohort seminars and establish criteria for attendance.
4. In collaboration with the Department of Higher Education, work to “break the code”, with reasonable practices for transferring credit and awarding prior learning credit for military experience so that our student veterans receive a reliable assessment of prior learning before making a decision to attend one of our state institutions.
5. Develop means to match veterans with needed services on campus, including a web-based community for veterans to interact with other student veterans confidentially. Design professional development tools for university members to support veterans in their need for specialized services.
6. Develop or adopt a standard for what programs and services most benefit student veterans on campus. Work to create an online or public facing “*Consumer Reports style*” overview of which services and programs are available at which school as opposed to specious veteran-friendly rankings.
7. Develop a web-based professional development program to provide basic information for faculty, staff, and administrators to understand and to support the success of student veterans effectively.
8. Develop and maintain a series of webinars, to be conducted each year on basic and advanced certifying official duties.



Complete Empirical Observations and Recommendations from 2012-2013 Listening Tour

The 2012-2013 Listening Tour involved five campuses, including Greenfield Community College, Mount Wachusett Community College, Salem State University, Suffolk University, and UMass Lowell. The members of the SVAB as well as the number of student veteran participants at each listening tour varied, with at least two Board members or state representatives present, and anywhere from four to thirty student veteran participants at each session. During the Tour, much of what was observed and documented from the student veterans, faculty, and staff was consistent with national and state-level discussions concerning veterans' experiences on campus. As Massachusetts considers its role in supporting colleges and universities, the key objective is to determine how the Commonwealth can support these existing initiatives while simultaneously fostering the development of new veteran support programs which mimic best practice. A clear contrast between the concerns of community colleges and the concerns of four-year institutions emerged, primarily around the ability to deliver services and the extent to which any assistance from the Commonwealth is meaningful. We must keep in mind that the varied missions of institutions, along with access to resources, and the individual educational goals of student veterans interact to create a dynamic landscape for providing support. This suggests that there is no "one size fits all" approach to supporting veterans' higher education in Massachusetts.

Theme One: Dedicated Support Staff

Several main themes emerged from the data collected during these five focus group sessions, the first of which is the need for a full-time, dedicated professional to support student veterans. Campuses that evolved from a single, part-time employee who only performed GI Bill certifications to at least a full-time employee experienced rapid and noticeable improvements to the quality of services for veterans, particularly in areas other than benefits processing. While all 28 public institutions of higher learning in the Commonwealth report having a single point of contact for veterans, the most critical aspect of successfully supporting student veterans appears to be that a full-time staff member can focus on personal guidance without the additional responsibility of having to dedicate time to benefits certification.¹ This dedicated support staff individual is ideally a veteran or someone with extensive experience serving or working with veterans; however, any dedicated and committed professional with appropriate skills can fulfill this role. This individual also appears to be most beneficial when bringing an additional area of expertise to the position, such as academic advising, career counseling, or support counseling. An advantage to having this full-time employee is that this person serves as an intermediary expert who helps to bridge the gap between veterans and the campus in addition to demonstrating to veterans that the campus is invested in their success. Clearly, this is not feasible for the many campuses in Massachusetts with small numbers of student veterans, but for many campuses the volume of benefits certifications prohibits the delivery of other essential services. Therefore, providing a dedicated employee separate from the certifying official has an immediate positive outcome for the persistence and success of student veterans in college. In an ideal situation, there would be a full time director and one or more staff members who function as liaisons for benefits certification. These positions could exist within the veterans' services office, registrar's office, or ideally the bursar's office.

Theme Two: Cohort-based First Year Programming

A second major finding is the apparent value of first year programming with the distinct purpose of aiding the transition of veterans to campus. In addition to participating in a traditional student orientation, the focus groups reported that targeted programming benefits student veterans in their transition from military to student life. Specifically, these programs assist veterans in developing the agency to be successful students, and to become successful navigating the less-structured environment that is a college campus. A salient point emerged that there are two current approaches to veteran



orientations and transitions: those which seek to integrate veterans into traditional orientations, and those which seek to segregate student veterans to minimize the potential for stigmatization by younger students, staff or faculty. Neither model seems to support the needs of student veterans fully.

There are cases, however, where institutions are considering targeted first year programming and modifying their orientation experience to serve student veterans. An example of an alternate approach comes from Suffolk University, where they have a two-week “boot camp” for student veterans who have not been on a college campus in a long time, if ever. This enhanced orientation and transition program helps student veterans succeed by familiarizing them with the more relaxed environment of college campuses as compared to the rigidity of the military. Another alternative approach comes from Salem State University which offers a voluntary first year cohort program that includes three courses: a first year seminar, a general education history course, and a public speaking course, all exclusively for veterans. The public speaking course evolved after feedback from student veterans suggested public speaking was a skill they desired.

The cohort model has precedent in the Commonwealth in the Emerging Scholars program at UMass Amherst. This program provides opportunities for promising under-represented first year students to live together and to take a yearlong seminar intended to prepare these students for admittance to the Commonwealth Honors College.² Further, the higher education empirical literature is replete with evidence that first year seminars have the highest positive correlation with student persistence through graduation.³ Additionally, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) has also identified first year programming as important to veteran success. In their most recent status report DHE indicates a significant rise in specific programming from 2010 to 2012.⁴

Theme Three: Translating Military Experience to College Credit

A third theme that emerged from the listening tour is the disparity and disconnect between experiences veterans had in the military and how these experiences translate into college credit. Many veterans conveyed that their schools are unable to assess military learning and education and therefore are unprepared to assign credit for those experiences. Furthermore, there are inconsistencies between how credited experience transfers both within campus departments and among various institutions.

Two consequences flow from the inconsistencies regarding the application of credited military experience between different departments and universities. First, veterans hear mixed messages about whether their military experiences are viable for academic credit. When student veterans are told they will receive credit before matriculation, only to learn that in fact they will not – or, when they receive credit in one department and this credit does not transfer outside that department – this creates an unnecessary obstacle that may limit overall success. Second, the resources provided by the GI Bill may be subsequently wasted when the academic credits cannot be applied to a degree.

There are opportunities for institutions to standardize both internally and state-wide. Colleges can use benchmarks for prior experiences and transfer credits from military training without doing a lot of work by consulting the rigorous criteria for prior learning credit from the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU).⁵ Another method for assigning prior learning credit may be through an institution’s continuing and professional education center in which it is a more common practice to award credit for work and non-traditional experiences. A final resource is to consult some of the military-based programs that do this work for institutions, such as the SMART transcripts from the Navy⁶ or the information at GoArmyEd.com⁷. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has again also recognized this as a critical issue, and is taking the lead on developing a consistent approach to assigning credit in accordance with the VALOR act.⁸

**Theme Four: In State Tuition for all Veterans**

Many veterans choose to attend college in Massachusetts because of the Commonwealth's reputation for high quality education at all levels. These opportunities are made possible by the post 9/11 GI Bill and the Yellow Ribbon Program. The Post 9/11 GI Bill pays for all tuition and mandatory fees up to and including the expenses of the highest cost public institution in the respective state. The Yellow Ribbon program is an important supplement to the Post 9/11 GI Bill, and is designed to cover additional costs incurred by student veterans attending private schools. At present, the Yellow Ribbon Program is also being used by student veterans who do not have in state residency. It is not required they use Yellow Ribbon, but many do in order to offset additional costs. Student veterans may not have a Massachusetts residency for a few reasons. They may be from out of state and seeking the high level of education that Massachusetts public schools provide, or they may have been from Massachusetts originally and changed their home of record while in the military. The result is that out of state veterans going to public schools are faced with additional obstacles and frustrations at institutions that are not accustomed to processing Yellow Ribbon claims.

To streamline the benefits acquisition process for veterans and the institution, it may be simpler to allow the small percentage of out of state veterans attending our public colleges and universities in-state status as students. Massachusetts may consider joining the other ten states that offer in-state tuition to all veterans regardless of residency status.⁹ A move such as this may enhance a veterans' ability to focus on their education and draw more veterans to our public schools, enhancing the overall environment and educational experiences for all students in classrooms at public institutions.

Theme Five: Intentional Accommodation of Student Veterans

A fifth theme from the listening tour is the availability of support services on or off campus, coupled with difficulty in identifying veterans who need assistance and encouraging them to seek help. For some military veterans, there is a stigma around being perceived as weak, disabled or dangerous; likewise, many veterans generally want to avoid being stigmatized as a veteran with PTSD.¹⁰ This is perhaps the biggest obstacle to identifying student veterans who may need counseling services or other accommodations on campus. There is no easy solution to this problem, as the stigma reaches back to the Vietnam War era when student veterans were more unpopular than at any point in our nation's history.¹¹ Based on the concerns expressed about stigmatization or marginalization of veterans in school communities, it becomes necessary to create an environment for student veterans to self-identify in order to deliver and receive peer support.

There is a need for veterans to be able to connect informally with other veteran peers, as this provides a powerful means to support student veterans. The ideal context for veterans to connect with their peers is in a dedicated veterans' lounge or veterans' services office with a social space. In conjunction with the universal appeal of a veteran lounge, many campuses have active student veteran organizations to host social and community service events each year. While having a student veteran organization is not a panacea for student veteran issues, having a physical space available fosters more opportunities for veterans to congregate and generate peer support. Furthermore, the physical space enables the organic growth and development of student veteran organizations as needed by the student veteran population. It is important to note that many student veterans have separated from military service and are not active members of the military; therefore, it is critical to ensure that student veteran organizations are not militaristic in nature, and should not be conflated with ROTC or other military-oriented organizations on campus. For veterans transitioning to civilian life and student life, replicating a military organization may be an obstacle to an effective transition.

Another concept that facilitates peer support, both within single campuses and across the Commonwealth, is an Internet based resource, such as that which is provided by the Student Veterans of



America. While student veterans at any college could benefit from this type of resource, it would be most beneficial to student veterans on smaller campuses where resources or peer support systems are limited.

Theme Six: Campus Veteran Friendly Concepts

A final theme emerged surrounding various perspectives on campus veteran friendly rankings and ratings, most commonly seen with the GI Jobs.com¹² and Military Times Edge.com¹³ rankings and listings on the Internet. The universal sentiment of all focus groups is that campuses should aspire to be veteran friendly, and that campuses that are in fact veteran friendly experience fewer issues surrounding student veterans. What was also clear from participants' perspectives is that Internet ranking systems and labels of veteran friendliness are meaningless to both campuses who are legitimately veteran friendly and to veterans themselves.

Numerous critical questions arose regarding these Internet-based ranking sites, such as: Why does a campus have to create a veteran lounge to be veteran friendly? Why does a campus have to be a member of SOC in order to be a veteran friendly campus? Why does having a Veterans Upward Bound program have to be a criteria? Why does having ROTC on a campus matter for veteran friendliness?

The reality is that empirically tested criteria of veteran friendliness do not appear to inform Internet assessments of veteran friendliness. The starkest example may be that these lists do not consider the effects of faculty or support staff on the campus - the people that student veterans interact with most. Sentiments of participants during the listing tour clearly reflected that pursuing Internet-based rankings, grounded in static or inflexible criteria, should not be something high on the priority list for institutions. However, taking meaningful steps to support the success of student veterans according to their own campus context and student veteran population was a high priority: this is a veteran friendly action.

There is a need to identify schools that support veterans and more importantly the services that each school offers to veterans. A possible way to achieve this may be to develop a list of best practices for schools, and make schools' adoption of those best practices available to perspective student veterans. One benchmarking tool the Commonwealth could use is the Toolkit for Veteran-Friendly Institutions offered by the American Council of Education (ACE)¹⁴. Creating a *Consumer Reports* style overview of services available for veterans on campuses across the Commonwealth would allow veterans to choose a campus that best suits their needs rather than relying on poorly assigned rankings. Additionally the series of best practices could act as a state-sponsored guideline for institutions that want to provide ongoing support for student veterans.



Data on Massachusetts Student Veterans¹⁵

- Roughly 10,000 student veterans use VA provided education benefits and three quarters of them are using the Post 9/11 GI Bill
- Over 5,000 student veterans attend public institutions in the Commonwealth and almost 55% of those attend community colleges.
- 93 different private schools have identified student veterans on their campuses, six of those have over 100 student veterans and 38 schools have 10 or fewer veterans.
- The average number of student veterans at a private institution is 32 and at public institutions, the average is 175.
- An additional 400 student veterans use educational benefits at 70 non-degree granting institutions across the Commonwealth.



Notes

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13. Military Times Best for Vets Colleges 2013: <http://projects.militarytimes.com/jobs/best-for-vets/2013/colleges/4-year/>
14. American Council on Education (ACE) Toolkit for Veteran-friendly institutions
<http://www.todaysgibill.org/>
15. Department of Veterans Affairs: April 2013 RCS Report



Profiles of Success:

How student veterans and institutions have built programming to support veteran education.



University of Massachusetts Lowell

Establishing the Office of Veterans Services

University of Massachusetts Lowell has a long history of outstanding service to Military Veterans. Established in 1897 as the Lowell Textile School, the University has served many generations of Veterans, including those who have served in WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn. Following each of these conflicts, enrollment at the University has been bolstered by returning Veterans using their VA benefits. When the United States Congress recently expanded GI Bill educational benefits for Veterans in 2008, the University experienced a steady increase in the number of Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard students, along with Military Veterans. Since his appointment to Chancellor five years ago, Marty Meehan significantly expanded services available to student Veterans and created an Office of Veterans Services, demonstrating his dedication to ensuring their success. Currently, the University support offered to this population is comprehensive and proactive, and the program aims to be a nationally recognized model for Veterans Services in Higher Education. This paper reviews the evolution of the University of Massachusetts Lowell's Office of Veterans Services in addition to the challenges and successes faced in the process.

Chancellor Marty Meehan demonstrated persistent devotion to Veterans' issues while he served in Congress representing Massachusetts's Fifth Congressional District and as a member of the House Committee on Armed Services. As the new UMass Lowell Chancellor in 2007, he began a thorough evaluation of the University's services to student Veterans and established a University wide Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to provide a full assessment and recommend improvements. Comprised of representatives throughout the campus, the Standing Committee included members from the Faculty, Staff, Admissions, Graduate Admissions, Registrar's Office, Financial Services, Public Affairs, Counseling, the Student Veterans Organization, and the local Vet Center. Veterans Services, at that time, included a part time staff member in the Registrar's Office who processed student Veterans benefits with the assistance of two VA Work Study students. The Standing Committee met quarterly for over two years and, in 2010, authored a White Paper with recommendations to the Chancellor. Primary among these suggestions were the formal development of a Veterans Services program and the establishment of a student Veteran "lounge". That fall, during the University's annual Veterans Day celebration, the Chancellor agreed to both recommendations and announced formally that space would be devoted to an Office of Veterans Services with fulltime staff.

That year, the Chancellor allocated space and resources for an Office of Veterans Services, a Director of Veterans Services, a meeting place for student Veterans, and an operating budget with the goal to develop a nationally recognized Veterans Services program. Veterans' Services supervision re-aligned from the Registrar's Office to the Division of Student Affairs, a national Best Practice recommendation. Larry Siegel, Dean of Student Affairs, carefully considered requisite criteria for the Director of Veterans Services and insisted that a clinical background be part of the job posting, a move considered unusual within higher education Veterans Services programs. In August 2011, a new Director of Veterans Services, who was a former VA Social Worker, came on-board to create a research based Veterans' Program. Chancellor Marty Meehan, along with student Veterans, cut the ribbon for the UMass Lowell Office of Veterans Services and Veterans Lounge that September and, with unwavering support from University administration, the Office quickly built a reputation for outstanding services and advocacy for student Veterans.

Enhancing the Student Veteran Experience

During that year, new traditions, events, and culture changing efforts included the establishment of the UMass Lowell Military Veteran Alumni Hall of Fame with an annual induction ceremony, an annual



Military Ball, and expansion of the annual Veterans Day celebration, which is a Flag Raising Ceremony. UMass Lowell expanded student Veteran participation in the SALUTE National Honor Society (the only National Honor Society for Military Veterans), a Graduate Recognition Dinner, and the institution of all student Veterans wearing a white aiguillette on their left shoulders during the Graduation Ceremony in honor of their Military Service. A group of Alumni inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame, the Pershing Rifle Brothers, established the General Pershing Fund for Student Veterans, promising \$250,000 for short-term loans for student Veterans. The Veterans only Orientation expanded from just the Fall semester to both Fall and Spring semesters and a student Veterans Living and Learning Community provided increased social interaction between Veterans.

Improved processes and policies increased benefits and insured a more timely delivery of those benefits for student Veterans. The Office transferred all paper files to secure paperless files that enable easily accessed information. Online certification request for benefits enabled staff to process VA benefits more easily so student Veterans did not wait months for their monthly stipends. With Congress's change for VA Benefits implemented in August 2011, UMass Lowell retroactively increased Yellow Ribbon benefits from \$323.50 per semester to the maximum allowed so that student Veterans would be able to continue and complete their education.

The Office of Veterans Services' expanded services established positive interactions with student Veterans. They began to rely on the Office to answer questions about VA benefits and listened when staff suggested they transfer to using Chapter #31, Vocational Rehabilitation when appropriate. VA Vocational Rehabilitation Applications were completed and submitted to the VA for those qualifying. Staff established close working relationships with UMass Lowell's Office of Disability Services so that Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries and other issues could receive the accommodations they deserve. Student Veterans began requesting referrals to local VA services and engaged more in treatment and assessment of service related issues. Compensation and Pension claims were submitted by the Office to the VA for processing and student Veterans are advised to seek a Service Veterans Officer for representation. National and State programs supporting Veterans were contacted and enlisted in order that student Veterans would continue their educations. The Massachusetts SAVE and SHARP programs assisted student Veterans when necessary. Student Veterans experiencing difficulty with their VA educational benefits counted on the Office of Veterans Services to advocate for them with the VA and UMass Lowell Office of Veterans Services staff requested expedited processing for student Veterans with pressing financial needs.

Over the past year and a half, the Office has established reliable reporting on student Veterans and sought to improve identification and classification of all military affiliated students on campus. In order for data to be reliable, process improvements offered new and truthful reporting. In Fall 2011, UMass Lowell served 500 student Veterans and Military members. Spring 2013 finds that number has increased to over 1200. Demographics of this population inform program development and improvement, and without it, the University can only rely on conjecture and antidotal evidence.

This past year, the Office of Veterans Services focused on transforming the Student Veterans Organization (SVO) to a vital, recognized, and valuable contributor to campus student life. Membership exponentially increased and members attended the SVA National Conference in January. In October 2012, the Chancellor declared the week before Veterans Day, Student Veterans Week and the SVO distributed both UMass Lowell Veteran and UMass Lowell Veteran Supporter backpack tags to acknowledge the Military service of our students. The SVO hosted several fundraisers for the General Pershing Fund, completed community service, instituted an Annual Golf Outing, and will shortly host their first Annual Change of Command Ceremony. SVO members hold Board positions on other student organizations and have a member elected to the Student Government Association. Plans for next year's SVO far exceed their current achievements, and the university continues to provide consistent support and encouragement.



The Office of Veterans Services staff members attend national conferences to gather ideas and share both successes and challenges. The Director presented at the Veterans Symposium at the University of Louisville in February 2013. Foundational clinical research crucial to the success of UMass Lowell's program was briefed and the development of the program reviewed. Successes include building camaraderie within both the student Veteran community and the local Lowell Veterans community (The Office invites local Veterans of all eras to UMass Lowell Veterans' events and they attend). The Office successfully developed mutually beneficial processes and supports with the following university components including the Admissions Office, Counseling Services, Student Health Services, Special Events, Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, Student Financial Office, Residence Life, STARS (Behavioral Committee), Academic Advising, the Career and Co-Op Center, Advancement, Academic Tutoring, Faculty and Staff. Office staff presented military cultural understanding presentations so that those interested can better assist student Veterans.

Challenges and Opportunities

UMass Lowell's Veterans Services program faced challenges borne of their own success. With a significantly increasing student Veteran population came resource issues, and both increasing space requirements and staffing required inventive approaches. Expansion and new construction provides future accommodations and short term sharing relieves crowding presently. In order to address the staffing issue, current staff stretch their hours with increased positions in the near future easing stress for staff. The most important challenge during the establishment and expansion of the program would be the development of trusting and mutually beneficial relationships with student Veterans, University faculty, and staff. For the student Veterans who experienced little support prior to the program's expansion, long waits for benefits and lack of a single locus of support caused frustration and alienated many of them. Demonstrating consistent advocacy and developing a reliable reputation for answering questions and solving problems overcame this issue and created a student Veteran "fan club". Veterans began recruiting others to attend UMass Lowell and shared their positive experiences nationally on social media. University Faculty and Staff also showed initial resistance until Veteran Services consistently delivered new processes that assisted other administrative units and respectfully cooperated in an effort to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. As a result, increased and expanded University service and support to student Veterans is a benefit to the University.

The Department of Defense estimates that 1.5 million service members will be leaving military service in the next five years. Recent use of the Post 9/11 GI Bill demonstrates that a large number of these Veterans seek to use their educational benefits. UMass Lowell proactively created a Veterans program designed to absorb the wave of incoming student Veterans, while maintaining outstanding service to them, maximizing graduation rates, and minimizing their pain and suffering while transitioning from military to civilian life. Student Veterans and their families enjoy substantial University resources in addition to referral to VA, Community, and National support services. Those with undiagnosed injuries receive additional services, encouragement, and support to pursue appropriate treatment and intervention. The UMass Lowell highly values the contributions to the classroom and the social fabric of the campus, while recognizing the potential contributions of these veterans to the Nation and the World. UMass Lowell is dedicated to developing student Veterans who are Work Ready, Life Ready and World Ready!



Northeastern University

The Student Veterans Organization (SVO) at Northeastern University was founded in 2009 by a mandate from the University. Northeastern saw the value created by Veterans participating in their own group that leads to success. The group met monthly and discussed ways to better the lives of veterans at the University. It tackled issues like post 9/11 GI Bill payments, The Yellow Ribbon Program, and health benefits. The members gradually became friends and by late 2011 reaffirmed their commitment to the group and began its expansion. In the last year it has grown exponentially to include more than twenty active members, a veteran's lounge, monthly social events, and a strong relationship with the University's administration. Most notably, the Student Veterans of America awarded the SVO as the 2012 'Chapter of the Year'.

Meeting to discuss policy

After the creation of the group, members met to identify policies that best ensure the success of veterans. At the time, a major hurdle was the Veterans Administration ability to process paper work correctly and in a timely manner. Northeastern also had some difficulties acclimating to the new process of certifying veterans for the new Post 9-11 G.I. Bill. This galvanized the group to focus on ensuring that all veterans get paid correctly and on time.

The best way to do this, the group decided, was to ask the University to hire a dedicated Veterans Services Specialist. This way, there could be a single point of contact that veterans could go to get information on application to the university, financial aid status, and general information about the University. The SVO also pushed for the creation of a Veterans space that could act as a 'sanctuary' for veterans to get away from the general student body and bond with individuals who have similar experiences.

Policy proposal

To address these issues the SVO leadership arranged a monthly meeting with key University officials in the newly created Veterans Success Committee. This committee met monthly to discuss different projects the SVO was undertaking as well as to propose changes to improve the standard of life at Northeastern for veterans. This committee would also discuss difficulties and how realistic the proposals from the SVO were to actually being implemented.

In April 2012, the SVO met with Northeastern University President Joseph Aoun to discuss the future of the SVO. There the group discussed above-mentioned policies that could be implemented to make Northeastern a leader in veterans services in the 'Boston Area'. President Aoun agreed, but challenged the group to be the best in the country. The SVO leadership took this to heart and did everything in its power to meet this challenge.

Gaining momentum – 2012

With new leadership elected in May 2012, the SVO instituted a number of policies that would not only grow the group but also achieve success with the previously proposed policies. To do this the group launched a website (www.neu.edu/svo), social media accounts, and built relationships with the Universities media outlets. Also, the leadership committed to holding a general monthly meeting with all its members outside of the Veterans Success Committee meetings. Events were planned monthly, such as brewery tours, sporting events, and ski trips. These policies went a long way to building a group committed to each other's individual success at Northeastern University and by December 2012 the SVO had tripled its active member base.



The SVO leadership recognized that veterans could sometimes feel 'isolated' on campus. To address this, the Educational Outreach Program (EOP) was established to bridge the general student body with the veteran community. As part of the EOP, members of the SVO volunteer to go speak in front of classes about their experiences. The SVO works with individual professors whose curriculum can match the experiences of the veterans. This enhances the curriculum of the professors, provides an outlet for veterans to speak about their experiences, and builds a connection with the Student Body. Questionnaires were also sent out before and after to the professors to gauge the effectiveness of this program.

Enacting Policies

Meanwhile, the SVO leadership continued to reform the certifying process as well as push for a dedicated Veterans Services Specialist and a Veteran's Lounge. It was not long before the SVO was able to achieve these policies. In late August 2012 the SVO acquired keys to a space in 124 Forsyth Building, at Northeastern's main campus, as a Veterans lounge. Soon thereafter, on Veterans Day 2012, Northeastern announced that they had hired the Veterans Services Specialist.

Student Veterans of America Award

In January 2013, The SVO was asked by the Student Veterans of America to present their 'Business Plan' at their National Conference held in Orlando, Florida. There, the SVO leadership was asked about their success by a panel of judges and was deemed the 'Chapter of the Year' by the Student Veterans of America.

Future

Moving forward, the SVO is working to build relationships with officials at the local, state, and national levels as well as with business to maximize benefits for their membership. The SVO partners with other local SVO's to provide guidance and insight as to how to become successful.



Greenfield Community College

Greenfield Community College (GCC) has taken significant steps to ensure that the institution meets the needs of student veterans on campus. GCC is preparing an ambitious plan to create a comprehensive veterans education program to address the needs of this rapid enrollment growth of student veterans on campus.

While preparing, promoting and producing these important changes, the following outcomes continue to be at the forefront of GCC's success:

- Student veteran peer engagement
- Top-down commitment (dedicated human, physical, fiscal resources)
- A sustainable model (inclusive components)

Educational programming for student veterans began in 2009 as a peer-initiated, peer-driven quest as one student's transition struggles motivated him to seek out support. The designated VA certifying official, a front line clerk in the Financial Aid office, was the only individual that student veterans came into contact with for services, therefore, the information was limited to processing paperwork for the Veterans Administration.

The student veteran that ignited awareness of student veterans on campus met with his advisor on a weekly basis for support. It was through those meetings that the academic advisor recognized her limitations with expertise and resources to assist the student veteran in a meaningful way. Together the student veteran and the advisor initiated a weekly meeting to create visibility and attract other student veterans. The group met on Wednesdays from 12:00-12:50 p.m. wherever there was space available on campus. The academic advisor was granted 7.5 hours a week to attend the meetings and explore veteran-related issues.

The weekly student veteran meeting was promoted through digital media on campus, postcards, posters, weekly emails to all students, and word of mouth. This marketing yielded very little interest throughout campus and the meetings were not well attended. The few student veterans that attended the meetings decided to extend their peer-to-peer outreach in the gathering spaces where student veterans could be found beginning with the smoking pavilions and in to the classrooms. They also felt that the group needed to be named and they created a Facebook page. VetNet (GCC Student Veterans Network Organization) became the identifying tag and its identity began to develop. Student veterans hit the smoking shacks on campus and their classrooms with meeting cards in hand.

During that fall 2009 semester, the college registered for a webinar: *Building a Veteran Friendly Campus* and key student affairs personnel attended. Although awareness was created, administrative interest fell short of tangible commitment to serving student veterans. Recognizing the forthcoming battles for support, the academic advisor and the few student veterans went on the road for recruitment and education to learn from institutions that had a visible student veteran contingent. GCC students and the advisor visited the UMass-Amherst Veterans Office (a feeder institution for GCC) to experience a veteran 'space.' Students returned to GCC with a clear vision that dedicated space was necessary but understood that they had to create the need and awareness for administrators to consider a proposal. Student "vet-dar", a nickname for veteran awareness radar was in high gear, best practices handouts were produced and distributed, VetNet T-shirts and buttons were made, a GCC Veterans Group banner was created, fundraisers (bake sales, raffles, more bake sales) for local veterans organizations (DAV, Toys for Tots, etc.) happened on a regular basis. This allowed VetNet to establish solid resource connections with (local) veteran agencies (Springfield VET Center, VA Medical, S.A.V.E., SVA, Holyoke Soldiers Home, VA Leeds).

These activities attracted the attention of students, college administrators, faculty, and community



members. VetNet meetings grew with student veterans, allies, and staff supporters. Student veterans formalized their group with elections (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Sergeant at Arms) and a mission statement for the group. The primary goal of VetNet is to generate a campus-wide culture that embraces the leadership, discipline, and high standards veterans bring to campus while translating their military experience to student success. Commitment from the VetNet leadership sparked synergy on and off campus that began to draw the greater community together. Off campus, VetNet members sported their t-shirts at community events, including Veterans and Memorial Day parades, and helped to clean local parks and cemeteries. On campus, VetNet hosted a 'meet & greet' with other student club leaders to learn more about their purpose and identify ways to collaborate. Following this gathering, VetNet officially applied for and gained approval for status as a student life club. Subsequently, the members began to strategize ways to become more connected with the campus community and developed an aggressive campaign to vote a student veteran in as a campus trustee while others became senators and active members in student activities. This political positioning brought the voice of student veterans to the forefront of student life and the administration. Student veterans began to recognize that co-curricular activity was a perfect opportunity to show the community where the gaps in services and support existed for student veterans. (i.e., information resources, new student orientation, recognition at graduation, safe space, academic advising, counseling, and professional development for staff).

While VetNet members became visible and fully engaged with student life activities, the advisor drafted a proposal for permanent space on campus. In the fall of 2011, GCC opened the VETS Center, home to VetNet. The space has evolved over the last eighteen months to include formal and informal resources for any veteran or veteran ally, a welcome desk where a student veteran greets visitors, four computer stations, printer/copier/fax machine, a study area, and an office for benefits certification files and the academic advisor/veterans coordinator. The VETS Center is located in the Main Campus building and serves as the central hub for our veterans programming on campus. The atmosphere gives a 'mini-USO feel' and attracts a cross-section of folks from civilian peers to community leaders. The opening of the VETS Center dissolved many of the barriers and myths that existed on campus regarding student veterans.

While VetNet has developed veterans personally, emotionally, and academically, there are roadblocks that continue to threaten student veteran retention, such as *limited counseling services, full time enrollment for full benefits, delayed Gi Bill payments, health record and state insurance requirements, class attendance and participation requirements*). The sustainability of the VETS Center is contingent upon the ability to keep student veterans engaged in and out of the classroom.

GCC has made a public commitment to developing a comprehensive student veteran's center which includes a coordinator and a small budget for programming. The epitome of this commitment was actualized this semester when the College conducted a daylong professional development seminar, involving the entire campus community. In coordination with supervisors, offices closed on this day to make it possible for all staff to participate. The day profiled how we can enhance the way we work with our veterans. The theme for the day was: *From Military Service to College Campus life: Reintegration Challenges for Returning Students*.

In many ways, this year's staff development day is a culminating event that exemplifies the culture shift inspired by one student veteran's need to be visible and supported.

**Resolves****2008****CHAPTER 1** RESOLVE PROVIDING FOR AN INVESTIGATION AND STUDY BY A SPECIAL COMMISSION RELATIVE TO THE HIDDEN WOUNDS OF WAR ON MASSACHUSETTS SERVICE MEMBERS.

Resolved, That a special commission is hereby established for the purposes of making an investigation and study relative to the mental health effects of war on those citizens of the commonwealth returning from active duty and the establishment of a mandatory mental health treatment program for national guard members who engage in combat, a state military family leave policy for caregivers and a statewide education training program to assist law enforcement, corrections officers and other first responders in recognizing the early warning signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. The commission shall consist of: 4 members of the senate, 1 of whom shall be the president of the senate or a designee who shall serve as co-chair , 1 of whom shall be the minority leader of the senate or a designee , 1 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or a designee and 1 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse or a designee ; 6 members of the house of representatives, 1 of whom shall be the speaker or a designee who shall serve as co-chair, 1 of whom shall be the minority leader of the house of representatives or a designee, 1 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or a designee, 1 of whom shall be the chair of the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse or a designee; the adjutant general of the national guard or a designee; the secretary of veterans' services or a designee; the commissioner of mental health or a designee; the commissioner of probation or a designee; and 5 persons to be appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 1 of whom shall be a veterans' agent to be selected by the president of the Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association and 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association.

All appointments shall be made not later than 30 days after the effective date of this resolve. The chairpersons shall meet with the commission not later than 60 days after the effective date of this resolve.

Members shall not receive compensation for their services but may receive reimbursement for the reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out their responsibilities as members of the commission.

Not later than September 15, 2008, the commission shall report to the general court the result of its investigation and study and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry its recommendations into effect by filing the same with the clerk of the house of representatives who shall forward the same to the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs and

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the joint committee on mental health and substance abuse.

Approved April 10 , 2008



Acts
2012
CHAPTER 108 AN ACT RELATIVE TO VETERANS' ACCESS, LIVELIHOOD, OPPORTUNITY AND RESOURCES.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to provide forthwith benefits to certain veterans and servicemembers, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

SECTION 1. [Section 61 of chapter 7 of the General Laws](#), as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out, in line 30, the word “banks” and inserting in place thereof the words:- , lending institutions.

SECTION 1A. Said [section 61 of said chapter 7 of the General Laws](#), as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out the words “minority and women”, in lines 32 and 33, lines 37 and 64, and inserting in place thereof, in each instance, the following words:- minority, women and veterans.

SECTION 2. Said [section 61 of said chapter 7](#), as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out subsection (h) and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

(h) SDO shall seek to encourage voluntary assistance programs by which nonminority, non-women and non-veteran business employees are loaned to minority, women and veteran businesses or by which minority, women and veteran business persons are taken into viable business ventures to acquire training and experience in managing business affairs.

SECTION 3. Said [section 61 of said chapter 7](#), as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after subsection (i) the following subsection:-

(i½) SDO shall promulgate regulations to encourage and facilitate participation on public projects for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses interested in and capable of providing construction and design services on public construction and design projects. For the purposes of this subsection, “service-disabled veteran-owned small business” shall mean a business that is verified by the federal government’s Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, Pub. L. 109-461, and determined to be a service-disabled veteran-owned small business concern in accordance with 38 CFR Part 74 and Pub. L. 111-275.

SECTION 4. [Section 35CC of chapter 10 of the General Laws](#), as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word “families”, in line 6, the following words:- , including immediate family members of certain active duty members of the armed forces who were killed in action.

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SECTION 5. [Chapter 15A of the General Laws](#) is hereby amended by adding the following section:-

Section 42. (a) The council shall develop and adopt a written policy requiring each public institution of higher education to develop a set of written policies and procedures governing the evaluation of a student's military occupation, military training, coursework and experience, to determine whether academic credit shall be awarded by the institution for the evaluated occupation, experience, training and coursework. The council's policy may require that the occupation, training, experience or courses meet the standards of the American Council on Education or equivalent standards for awarding academic credit. The council may also develop and adopt a written policy requiring each public institution of higher education to develop a set of written policies and procedures to standardize credit-by-exam equivalencies for exams funded through the Department of Defense. The educational credit shall be awarded based upon each institution's admissions standards and shall be consistent with the mission of the commonwealth's system of public higher education, as defined by the council under section 1. Each public institution of higher education shall designate a single point of contact for a student who is enrolled in such an institution and who is also a veteran, as defined in clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4, to conduct such an evaluation and determination.

(b) The council shall consult with the chief executive officers of each public institution of higher education in implementing the policy set forth in subsection (a) and the policy adopted by the council shall, to the greatest extent possible, provide for consistent application by all the commonwealth's public institutions of higher education and promote accurate and complete academic counseling.

SECTION 6. The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after [chapter 15D](#) the following chapter:-

Chapter 15E

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Section 1. As used in this chapter, the following words shall, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:-

"Active duty", full-time duty status in the active uniformed service of the United States, including members of the National Guard and Reserve on active duty orders pursuant to 10 U.S.C. sections 1209 and 1211.

"Children of military families", a school-aged child, enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, in the household of an active duty member.

"Compact commissioner", the voting representative of each compacting state appointed pursuant to section 7 of this compact.

"Deployment", the period 1 month prior to the service members' departure from the members' home station on military orders to 6 months after returning to the members' home station.

"Education records", those official records, files and data directly related to a student and maintained by the school or local education agency, including, but not limited to, records encompassing all the material kept in the student's cumulative folder such as general identifying data, records of attendance and of academic work completed, records of achievement and results of evaluative tests, health data,

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disciplinary status, test protocols and individualized education programs.

“Extracurricular activities”, a voluntary activity sponsored by the school or local education agency or an organization sanctioned by the local education agency. Extracurricular activities include, but are not limited to, preparation for and involvement in public performances, contests, athletic competitions, demonstrations, displays and club activities.

“Interstate commission on educational opportunity for military children” or “interstate commission”, the commission that is created under section 9 of this compact.

“Local education agency”, a public authority legally constituted by the state as an administrative agency to provide control of and direction for kindergarten through grade 12 public educational institutions.

“Member state”, a state that has enacted this compact.

“Military installation”, a base, camp, post, station, yard, center, homeport facility for any ship or other activity under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense, including any leased facility, which is located within any of the several states, the District of Columbia, the commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Marianas Islands and any other United States territory. Such term does not include any facility used primarily for civil works, rivers and harbors projects or flood control projects.

“Non-member state”, a state that has not enacted this compact.

“Receiving state”, the state to which a child of a military family is sent, brought or caused to be sent or brought.

“Rule”, a written statement by the interstate commission promulgated under section 12 of this compact that is of general applicability, implements, interprets or prescribes a policy or provision of the compact or an organizational, procedural or practice requirement of the interstate commission and has the force and effect of statutory law in a member state, and includes the amendment, repeal or suspension of an existing rule.

“Sending state”, the state from which a child of a military family is sent, brought or caused to be sent or brought.

“State”, a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Marianas Islands and any other United States territory.

“Student”, the child of a military family for whom the local education agency receives public funding and who is formally enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12.

“Transition”, the formal and physical process of transferring from school to school or the period of time in which a student moves from 1 school in the sending state to another school in the receiving state.

“Uniformed services”, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, including the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Public Health Services.

“Veteran”, a person who served in the uniformed services and who was discharged or released from service under conditions other than dishonorable.

Section 2. (a) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b), this compact shall apply to the children of:

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- (1) active duty members of the uniformed services;
- (2) members or veterans of the uniformed services who are severely injured and medically discharged or retired for a period of 1 year after medical discharge or retirement; and
- (3) members of the uniformed services who die on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty for a period of 1 year after death.

(b) This interstate compact shall only apply to local education agencies.

(c) This compact shall not apply to the children of:

- (1) inactive members of the national guard and military reserves;
- (2) members of the uniformed services now retired, except as provided in subsection (a);
- (3) veterans of the uniformed services, except as provided in subsection (a); and
- (4) other United States Department of Defense personnel and other federal agency civilian and contract employees not defined as active duty members of the uniformed services.

Section 3. (a) If official education records cannot be released to the parents for the purpose of transfer, the custodian of the records in the sending state shall prepare and furnish to the parent a complete set of unofficial education records containing uniform information as determined by the interstate commission. Upon receipt of the unofficial education records by a school in the receiving state, the school shall enroll and appropriately place the student based on the information provided in the unofficial records, pending validation by the official records, as soon as possible.

(b) Simultaneous with the enrollment and conditional placement of the student, the school in the receiving state shall request the student's official education records from the school in the sending state. Upon receipt of this request, the school in the sending state shall process and furnish the official education records to the school in the receiving state within 10 days or within the time as is reasonably determined under the rules promulgated by the interstate commission.

(c) Compacting states shall give 30 days from the date of enrollment or within the time as is reasonably determined under the rules promulgated by the interstate commission for students to obtain any immunizations required by the receiving state. For a series of immunizations, initial vaccinations shall be obtained within 30 days or within the time as is reasonably determined under the rules promulgated by the interstate commission.

(d) Students shall be allowed to continue enrollment at the grade level in the receiving state that is equal with the grade level from the local education agency in the sending state at the time of transition, regardless of age. A student that has satisfactorily completed the prerequisite grade level in the local education agency in the sending state shall be eligible for enrollment in the next highest grade level in the receiving state, regardless of age. A student transferring after the start of the school year in the receiving state shall enter the school in the receiving state at the level validated by an accredited school in the sending state.

Section 4. (a) When a student transfers before or during the school year, the receiving state school shall initially honor placement of the student in educational courses based on the student's enrollment in the sending state school or educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state if the courses are offered and space is available. Course placement shall include, but not be limited to, honors, international baccalaureate, advanced placement, vocational, technical and career pathways courses. Continuing the student's academic program from the previous school and promoting

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placement in academically and career challenging courses should be paramount when considering placement. This shall not preclude the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement and continued enrollment of the student in the courses.

(b) The receiving state school shall initially honor placement of the student in educational programs based on current educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state or participation or placement in like programs in the sending state. Such programs shall include, but not be limited to: (i) gifted and talented programs; and (ii) English as a second language programs. This shall not preclude the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement of the student.

(c) In compliance with the federal requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. section 1400 et seq, the receiving state shall initially provide comparable services to a student with disabilities based on: (i) the student's current individualized education program; (ii) the requirements of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. section 794; and (iii) title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. sections 12131-12165. The receiving state shall make reasonable accommodations and modifications to address the needs of incoming students with disabilities, subject to an existing 504 or title II plan, to provide the student with equal access to education. This shall not preclude the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement of the student.

(d) Local education agency administrative officials shall have flexibility in waiving course or program prerequisites or other preconditions for placement in courses or programs offered under the jurisdiction of the local education agency.

(e) A student whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from or immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, may be granted additional excused absences at the discretion of the local education agency superintendent to visit with that parent or legal guardian on leave or preparing for or returning from deployment.

Section 5. (a) The following shall be required to be eligible for enrollment in the receiving state's school:

(1) special power of attorney, relative to the guardianship of a child of a military family and executed under applicable law, shall be sufficient to enroll or take any other action requiring parental participation and consent under this compact;

(2) a local education agency shall not charge local tuition to a transitioning military child placed in the care of a non-custodial parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial parent; and

(3) a transitioning military child placed in the care of a non-custodial parent or other person standing in loco parentis who lives in a jurisdiction other than that of the custodial parent, may continue to attend the school in which the child was enrolled while residing with the custodial parent.

(b) State and local education agencies shall facilitate the opportunity for transitioning military children's inclusion in extracurricular activities, regardless of application deadlines, to the extent the children are otherwise qualified.

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Section 6. (a) To facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, local education agency administrative officials shall waive specific courses required for graduation if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed in another local education agency or shall provide reasonable justification for denial. Should a waiver not be granted to a student who would otherwise qualify to graduate from the sending school, the local education agency shall provide an alternative means of acquiring required coursework so that graduation may occur on time.

(b) To facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, receiving states may accept exit or end-of-course exams required for graduation from the sending state or national norm-referenced achievement tests or alternative testing, in lieu of testing requirements for graduation in the receiving state; require the student to take scheduled exit test in the receiving state, if the student is able to take the tests prior to the end of grade 12; or accept evidence or information from the sending or receiving district that demonstrates that the student has met the receiving state's graduation standard, either through a transcript of courses taken and grades received from the sending and or receiving district; a portfolio of work samples for the student that addresses the required high school standards; standardized norm-referenced test results in the subject required by the receiving state for graduation; or other relevant information.

(c) To facilitate the on-time graduation of children of military families, should a military student transferring at the beginning or during grade 12 be ineligible to graduate from the receiving local education agency after all alternatives in subsection (b) have been considered, the sending and receiving local education agencies shall ensure the receipt of a diploma from the sending local education agency if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending local education agency. In the event that either the transferring or receiving state is not a member of this compact, the member state shall use best efforts to facilitate the on-time graduation of the student under subsections (a) and (b).

Section 7. (a) Each member state shall, through the creation of a state council or use of an existing body or board, provide for the coordination among its agencies of government, local education agencies and military installations concerning the state's participation in and compliance with this compact and interstate commission activities. While each member state may determine the membership of its own state council, the membership shall include at least: (i) the state secretary of education; (ii) a superintendent of a school district with a high concentration of military children; (iii) a representative from a military installation; (iv) 1 representative from the legislature; (v) 1 representative from the executive branch; and (vi) other offices and stakeholder groups that the state council deems appropriate. A member state that does not have a school district deemed to contain a high concentration of military children may appoint a superintendent from another school district to represent local education agencies on the state council.

(b) The state council of each member state shall appoint or designate a military family education liaison to assist military families and the state in facilitating the implementation of this compact.

(c) The compact commissioner responsible for the administration and management of the state's participation in the compact shall be appointed by the governor or as otherwise determined by each member state.

(d) The compact commissioner and the military family education liaison designated under this compact

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shall be ex-officio members of the state council, unless either is already a full voting member of the state council.

Section 8. The compacting states hereby create the interstate commission on educational opportunity for military children. The activities of the interstate commission are the formation of public policy and are a discretionary state function. The interstate commission shall:

- (a) be a body corporate and joint agency of the member states and shall have all the responsibilities, powers and duties set forth in this compact and additional powers as may be conferred upon it by a subsequent concurrent action of the respective legislatures of the member states under the terms of this compact;
- (b) consist of 1 interstate commission voting representative from each member state who shall be that state's compact commissioner;
- (c) entitle each member state represented at a meeting of the interstate commission to 1 vote;
- (d) require a majority of the total member states to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, unless a larger quorum is required by the by-laws of the interstate commission;
- (e) prohibit the delegation of a vote from 1 member state to another member state; provided, however, that in the event the compact commissioner is unable to attend a meeting of the interstate commission, the governor or state council may delegate voting authority to another person from their state for a specified meeting;
- (f) allow the by-laws to provide for meetings of the interstate commission to be conducted by telecommunication or electronic communication;
- (g) consist of ex-officio, non-voting representatives who are members of interested organizations, as defined in the by-laws, which may include, but shall not be limited to, members of the representative organizations of military family advocates, local education agency officials, parent and teacher groups, the United States Department of Defense, the Education Commission of the States, the Interstate Agreement on the Qualification of Educational Personnel and other interstate compacts affecting the education of children of military members;
- (h) meet at least once each calendar year, provided, that the chairperson may call additional meetings and upon the request of a simple majority of the member states, shall call additional meetings;
- (i) establish an executive committee, whose members shall include the officers of the interstate commission and such other members of the interstate commission as determined by the by-laws; provided, that members of the executive committee shall serve a 1-year term and shall be entitled to 1 vote each; provided, further, that the executive committee shall have the power to act on behalf of the interstate commission, with the exception of rulemaking during periods when the interstate commission is not in session; provided further, that the executive committee shall oversee the day-to-day activities of the administration of the compact including enforcement and compliance with the compact, its by-laws and rules and other such duties as deemed necessary; and provided further that the United States Department of Defense shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the executive committee;
- (j) establish by-laws and rules that provide for conditions and procedures under which the interstate commission shall make its information and official records available to the public for inspection or copying; provided, that the interstate commission may exempt from disclosure the information or the

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official records that would adversely affect personal privacy rights or proprietary interests;

(k) give public notice of all meetings and all meetings shall be open to the public, except as set forth in the rules or as otherwise provided in the compact; provided, that the interstate commission and its committees may close a meeting, or a portion of a meeting, when the commission or committee determines by a two-thirds vote that an open meeting would likely:

(1) relate solely to the interstate commission's internal personnel practices and procedures;

(2) disclose matters specifically exempted from disclosure by federal and state statute;

(3) disclose trade secrets or commercial or financial information which is privileged or confidential;

(4) involve accusing a person of a crime or formally censuring a person;

(5) disclose information of a personal nature where disclosure would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(6) disclose investigative records compiled for law enforcement purposes; or

(7) relate specifically to the interstate commission's participation in a civil action or other legal proceeding;

(l) cause its legal counsel or designee to certify that a meeting may be closed and shall reference each relevant exemptible provision for any meeting or portion of a meeting which is closed under this clause; provided, that the interstate commission shall keep minutes which shall clearly describe all matters discussed in a meeting and shall provide an accurate summary of actions taken and the reasons for those actions, including a description of the views expressed and the record of a roll call vote; provided further, that all documents considered in connection with an action shall be identified in the minutes; and provided further, that all minutes and documents of a closed meeting shall remain under seal, subject to release by a majority vote of the interstate commission;

(m) collect standardized data concerning the educational transition of the children of military families under this compact, as directed through its rules which shall specify the data to be collected, the means of collection and data exchange and reporting requirements; provided, that such methods of data collection, exchange and reporting shall, as much as reasonably possible, conform to current technology and coordinate its information functions with the appropriate custodian of records as identified in the by-laws and rules; and

(n) create a process that permits military officials, education officials and parents to inform the interstate commission of alleged violations of the compact, its rules or when issues subject to the jurisdiction of the compact or its rules are not addressed by the state or local education agency; provided, that this section shall not be construed to create a private right of action against the interstate commission or any member state.

Section 9. The interstate commission may:

- (a) provide for dispute resolution among member states;
- (b) issue, upon request of a member state, advisory opinions concerning the meaning or interpretation of the interstate compact, its by-laws, rules and actions;
- (c) enforce compliance with the compact provisions and the rules promulgated by the interstate commission and in the by-laws through the use of all necessary and proper means, including, but not limited to, the use of the judicial process;

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- (d) establish and maintain offices, which shall be located within 1 or more of the member states;
- (e) purchase and maintain insurance and bonds;
- (f) borrow, accept, hire or contract for services or personnel;
- (g) establish and appoint committees including, but not limited to, an executive committee as required by paragraph 9 of subsection (a) of section 8;
- (h) elect or appoint officers, attorneys, employees, agents or consultants and fix the compensation, define the duties and determine the qualifications for those positions;
- (i) establish the interstate commission's personnel, policies and programs relating to conflicts of interest, rates of compensation and qualifications of personnel;
- (j) accept any and all donations and grants of money, equipment, supplies, materials and services and to receive, utilize and dispose of it;
- (k) lease, purchase, own, hold, improve, use or accept contributions of or donations of any property, real, personal or mixed;
- (l) sell, convey, mortgage, pledge, lease, exchange, abandon or otherwise dispose of any property, real, personal or mixed;
- (m) establish a budget and make expenditures;
- (n) adopt a seal and by-laws governing the management and operation of the interstate commission;
- (o) report annually to the legislatures, governors, judiciary and state councils of the member states concerning the activities of the interstate commission during the preceding year and the reports shall include recommendations that may have been adopted by the interstate commission;
- (p) coordinate education, training and public awareness regarding this compact and its implementation and operation for officials and parents or guardians impacted by this compact;
- (q) establish uniform standards for the reporting, collecting and exchanging of data;
- (r) maintain corporate books and records in accordance with the by-laws;
- (s) perform the functions necessary or appropriate to achieve the purposes of this compact; and
- (t) provide for the uniform collection and sharing of information between and among member states, schools and military families under this compact.

Section 10. (a) The interstate commission shall, by a majority vote of the members present and voting and within 12 months after the first interstate commission meeting, adopt by-laws to govern the conduct that is necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of this compact, which shall include, but not be limited to:

- (1) establishing the fiscal year of the interstate commission;
- (2) establishing an executive committee and other committees as may be necessary;
- (3) providing for the establishment of committees and for governing any general or specific delegation of authority or function of the interstate commission;
- (4) providing reasonable procedures for calling and conducting meetings of the interstate commission and ensuring reasonable notice of each meeting;
- (5) establishing the titles and responsibilities of the officers and staff of the interstate commission;
- (6) providing a mechanism for concluding the operations of the interstate commission and the return of surplus funds that may exist upon the termination of this compact after the payment and reserving of all of its debts and obligations; and

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(7) providing start-up rules for initial administration of the compact.

(b) The interstate commission shall, by a majority of the members, elect annually from among its members a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and a treasurer, each of whom shall have the authority and duties specified in the by-laws. The chairperson or, in the chairperson's absence or disability, the vice-chairperson, shall preside at all meetings of the interstate commission. The elected officers shall serve without compensation or remuneration from the interstate commission; provided, that subject to the availability of budgeted funds, the officers shall be reimbursed for ordinary and necessary costs and expenses incurred by them in the performance of their responsibilities as officers of the interstate commission.

(c) The executive committee shall have such authority and duties as may be set forth in the by-laws, including, but not limited to: (i) managing the affairs of the interstate commission in a manner consistent with the by-laws and purposes of the interstate commission; (ii) overseeing an organizational structure within the interstate commission and establishing appropriate procedures for the interstate commission to provide for the creation of rules, operating procedures and administrative and technical support functions; and (iii) planning, implementing and coordinating communications and activities with other state, federal and local government organizations in order to advance the goals of the interstate commission.

(d) The executive committee may, subject to the approval of the interstate commission, appoint or retain an executive director for a period, during which the terms, conditions and compensation shall be set by the interstate commission. The executive director shall serve as secretary to the interstate commission, but shall not be a member of the interstate commission. The executive director shall hire and supervise other personnel when authorized by the interstate commission.

(e) The interstate commission's executive director and employees shall be immune from suit and liability, either personally or in their official capacity, for a claim for damage to or loss of property, personal injury or other civil liability caused by, arising out of or relating to an actual or alleged act, error or omission that occurred, or that the person had a reasonable basis for believing occurred, within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities; provided, that the interstate commission's executive director and employees shall not be protected from suit or liability for damage, loss, injury or liability caused by the intentional or willful and wanton misconduct of such person.

(f) The liability of the interstate commission's executive director, employees or representatives for acts, errors or omissions that occur while acting within the scope of employment and within the person's state may not exceed the limits of liability set forth under the constitution and laws of that state for state officials, employees and agents. The interstate commission is considered to be an instrumentality of the states for the purposes of any such action. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to protect the person from suit or liability for damage, loss, injury or liability caused by the intentional or willful and wanton misconduct of such person.

(g) The interstate commission shall defend the executive director and its employees and, subject to the approval of the attorney general or other appropriate legal counsel of the member state represented by an interstate commission, shall defend interstate commission representatives in any civil action seeking to impose liability arising out of an actual or alleged act, error or omission that

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occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities, or that the defendant had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities; provided, however, that the actual or alleged act error or omission did not result from intentional or willful and wanton misconduct on the part of such person.

(h) To the extent that representatives and employees of the interstate commission are not covered by the state involved, the member state or the interstate commission, that representative or employee shall be held harmless in the amount of a settlement or judgment, including attorney's fees and costs, obtained against such persons arising out of an actual or alleged act, error or omission that occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities, or that such persons had a reasonable basis for believing occurred within the scope of interstate commission employment, duties or responsibilities; provided, however, that the actual or alleged act, error or omission did not result from intentional or willful and wanton misconduct on the part of such persons.

Section 11. (a) The interstate commission shall promulgate reasonable rules in order to effectively achieve the purposes of this compact. In the event the interstate commission exercises its rulemaking authority in a manner that is beyond the scope or the powers granted in this act, then that action by the interstate commission shall be invalid and have no force or effect.

(b) Rules shall be made pursuant to a rulemaking process that shall substantially, or as much as possible, conform with the Model State Administrative Procedure Act of 1981, uniform laws annotated, vol. 15, p.1 (2000) as amended.

(c) Not later than 30 days after a rule is promulgated, any person may file a petition for judicial review of the rule; provided, that the filing of such a petition shall not stay or otherwise prevent the rule from becoming effective unless the court finds that the petitioner has a substantial likelihood of success.

The court shall give deference to the actions of the interstate commission consistent with applicable law and shall not find the rule to be unlawful if the rule represents a reasonable exercise of the interstate commission's authority.

(d) If a majority of the legislatures of the compacting states reject a rule by enactment of a statute or resolution, then such rule shall have no further force and effect in any compacting state.

Section 12. (a) All courts shall take judicial notice of the compact and the rules in any judicial or administrative proceeding in a member state pertaining to the subject matter of this compact which may affect the powers, responsibilities or actions of the interstate commission.

(b) The interstate commission shall be entitled to receive all service of process in any such proceeding and shall have standing to intervene in the proceeding for all purposes. Failure to provide service of process to the interstate commission shall render a judgment or order void as to the interstate commission, this compact or promulgated rules.

(c) If the interstate commission determines that a member state has defaulted in the performance of its obligations or responsibilities under this compact, the by-laws or the promulgated rules, the interstate commission shall:

(1) provide written notice to the defaulting state and other member states, of the nature of the default, the means of curing the default and any action taken by the interstate commission; provided, that the interstate commission shall specify the conditions by which the defaulting state must cure its default;

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(2) provide remedial training and specific technical assistance regarding the default; and
(3) terminate a defaulting state from the compact if the defaulting state fails to cure the default and upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the member states, all rights, privileges and benefits conferred by this compact shall be terminated from the effective date of termination; provided that a cure of the default shall not relieve the offending state of obligations or liabilities incurred during the period of the default.

(d) Suspension or termination of membership in this compact shall be imposed only after all other means of securing compliance have been exhausted. Notice of intent to suspend or terminate shall be given by the interstate commission to the governor and the majority and minority leaders of the defaulting state's legislature and each of the member states.

(e) The state which has been suspended or terminated shall be responsible for all assessments, obligations and liabilities incurred through the effective date of suspension or termination including obligations that require performance beyond the effective date of suspension or termination.

(f) The interstate commission shall not bear any costs relating to any state that has been found to be in default or which has been suspended or terminated from the compact, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon in writing between the interstate commission and the defaulting state.

(g) The interstate commission shall attempt, upon the request of a member state, to resolve disputes which are subject to the compact and which may arise among member states and between member and non-member states. The interstate commission shall promulgate a rule providing for both mediation and binding dispute resolution for disputes as appropriate.

(h) The interstate commission, in the reasonable exercise of its discretion, shall enforce this compact.

(i) The remedies in this section shall not be the exclusive remedies of the interstate commission. The interstate commission may avail itself of any other remedies available under state law or the regulation of a profession.

Section 13. (a) The interstate commission shall pay, or provide for the payment of, the reasonable expenses of its establishment, organization and ongoing activities.

(b) The interstate commission may levy on and collect an annual assessment from each member state to cover the cost of the operations and activities of the interstate commission and its staff which must be in a total amount sufficient to cover the interstate commission's annual budget as approved each year. The aggregate annual assessment amount shall be allocated based upon a formula determined by the interstate commission, which shall promulgate a rule that is binding upon all member states.

(c) The interstate commission shall not incur obligations of any kind prior to securing the funds adequate to meet that obligation; nor shall the interstate commission pledge the credit of any of the member states, except by and with the authority of the member state.

(d) The interstate commission shall keep accurate accounts of all receipts and disbursements. The receipts and disbursements of the interstate commission shall be subject to the audit and accounting procedures established under its by-laws. All receipts and disbursements of funds handled by the interstate commission shall be audited yearly by a certified or licensed public accountant and the report of the audit shall be included in and become part of the annual report of the interstate commission.

Section 14. (a) Any state shall be eligible to become a member state.

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(b) The compact shall become effective and binding upon legislative enactment of the compact into law by no less than 10 states. The effective date shall be no earlier than December 1, 2007. Thereafter it shall become effective and binding as to any other member state upon enactment of the compact into law by that state. The governors of non-member states or the designees of non-member states shall be invited to participate in the activities of the interstate commission on a non-voting basis prior to adoption of the compact by all states.

(c) The interstate commission may propose amendments to the compact for enactment by the member states. No amendment shall become effective and binding upon the interstate commission and the member states unless it is enacted into law by unanimous consent of the member states.

Section 15. (a) Once effective, the compact shall continue in force and remain binding upon each and every member state; provided, that a member state may withdraw from the compact by specifically repealing the statute that enacted the compact into law.

(b) Withdrawal from this compact shall be by the enactment of a statute repealing this compact, but shall not take effect until 1 year after the effective date of such statute.

(c) The withdrawing state shall immediately notify the chairperson of the interstate commission in writing upon the introduction of legislation repealing this compact in the withdrawing state. The interstate commission shall notify the other member states of the withdrawing state's intent to withdraw within 60 days of receiving notice.

(d) The withdrawing state shall be responsible for all assessments, obligations and liabilities incurred through the effective date of withdrawal, including the performance of obligations which extend beyond the effective date of the withdrawal.

(e) Reinstatement following withdrawal of a member state shall occur upon the withdrawing state reenacting the compact or upon such later date as determined by the interstate commission.

Section 16. (a) This compact shall dissolve upon the date of the withdrawal or default of the member state which reduces the membership in the compact to 1 member state.

(b) Upon the dissolution of this compact, the compact shall become null and void and shall be of no further force or effect. The business and affairs of the interstate commission shall be concluded and surplus funds shall be distributed in accordance with the by-laws.

Section 17. (a) This compact shall be severable and if any phrase, clause, sentence or provision is deemed unenforceable, the remaining provisions of the compact shall be enforceable.

(b) This compact shall be liberally construed to effectuate its purposes.

(c) Nothing in this compact shall be construed to prohibit the applicability of other interstate compacts to which the states are members.

Section 18. (a) Nothing in this compact shall prevent the enforcement of any other law of a member state that is not inconsistent with this compact.

(b) All member states' laws conflicting with this compact are superseded to the extent of the conflict.

Section 19. (a) All lawful actions of the interstate commission, including all rules and by-laws promulgated by the interstate commission, shall be binding upon the member states.

(b) All agreements between the interstate commission and the member states shall be binding in accordance with the terms of the agreement.

(c) In the event any provision of this compact exceeds the constitutional limits imposed on the

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legislature of any member state, such provision shall be ineffective to the extent of the conflict with the constitutional provision of that member state.

SECTION 7. The third paragraph of said [section 26 of said chapter 31](#), as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- No appointing authority shall request military medical records for the purpose of employment other than that which is required by the administrator.

SECTION 7A. Clause Twenty-second A of [section 5 of chapter 59 of the General Laws](#), as so appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- No person who has received an exemption under this clause shall be denied the benefit of the exemption because the person returns to active service.

SECTION 8. Said [section 5 of said chapter 59 of the General Laws](#), as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 765 to 767, inclusive, the words “; provided, however, that in no case shall the abatement amount exceed the sum of \$2,500 in any fiscal year following the fifth fiscal year of receipt of the abatement”.

SECTION 8A. Said [chapter 59 of the General Laws](#) is hereby further amended by inserting after section 5M the following section:-

Section 5N. In any city or town which accepts this section, the board of selectmen of a town, or in a municipality having a town council form of government, the town council or the mayor, with the approval of the city council in a city, may establish a program to allow veterans, as defined in clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4, to volunteer to provide services to that city or town. In exchange for such volunteer services, the city or town shall reduce the real property tax obligations of that veteran on the veteran's tax bills and that reduction shall be in addition to any exemption or abatement to which that person is otherwise entitled; provided, however, that person shall not receive a rate of, or be credited with, more than the current minimum wage of the commonwealth per hour for the services provided pursuant to that reduction; and provided further, that the reduction of the real property tax bill shall not exceed \$1,000 in a given tax year. It shall be the responsibility of the city or town to maintain a record for each taxpayer including, but not limited to, the number of hours of service and the total amount by which the real property tax has been reduced and to provide a copy of that record to the assessor in order that the actual tax bill reflect the reduced rate. A copy of that record shall also be provided to the taxpayer prior to the issuance of the actual tax bill. The cities and towns shall have the power to create local rules and procedures for implementing this section in a way that is consistent with the intent of this section. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit the reduction of workforce or otherwise replace existing staff.

The amount by which a person's property tax liability is reduced in exchange for the volunteer services shall not be considered income, wages or employment for purposes of taxation as provided in chapter 62, for the purposes of withholding taxes as provided in [chapter 62B](#), for the purposes of workers' compensation as provided in [chapter 152](#) or any other applicable provisions of the General Laws. While providing such volunteer services, that person shall be considered a public employee for the purposes of chapter 258 and those services shall be deemed employment for the purposes of unemployment insurance as provided in [chapter 151A](#).

A city or town, by vote of its legislative body, subject to its charter, may adjust the exemption in this

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clause by: (i) allowing an approved representative for persons physically unable to provide such services to the city or town; or (ii) allowing the maximum reduction of the real property tax bill to be based on 125 volunteer service hours in a given tax year, rather than \$1,000.

SECTION 8B. [Section 2 of chapter 90 of the General Laws](#), as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the eighteenth paragraph the following paragraph:-

The registrar shall furnish, at the request of owners of private passenger motor vehicles and motorcycles, who are residents of the commonwealth and serving in active duty, a distinctive emblem to be affixed to the registration plate that identifies the branch of the armed services in which the owner serves. The registrar may charge a fee directly attributable to the cost of issuance of that emblem; provided, however, that this fee shall not exceed \$35. Any member of the armed forces who is dishonorably discharged shall return such plates to the registrar not later than 30 days after that discharge. The registrar shall not renew the license plate of a dishonorably discharged armed forces member until confirming that the distinctive emblem is not affixed to the plate. For the purposes of this section "active duty" shall mean full-time duty in active military service of the army, navy, marine corps, coast guard or air force of the United States, but shall not include active duty being served for the purpose of training as a reservist in the army national guard or air national guard.

SECTION 8C. [Chapter 112 of the General Laws](#), as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after section 1A the following section:-

Section 1B. (a) The director and each of the boards of registration and examination under the director's supervision, shall upon presentation of satisfactory evidence by an applicant for certification or licensure, accept education, training or service completed by an individual as a member of the armed forces, as defined in clause Forty-third of [section 7 of chapter 4](#), or the United States military reserves toward the qualifications required to receive the license or certification in question.

(b) The commissioner of public health and each of the boards of registration and examination under the commissioner's supervision, shall upon presentation of satisfactory evidence by an applicant for certification or licensure, accept education, training, or service completed by an individual as a member of the armed forces, as defined in clause Forty-third of [section 7 of chapter 4](#), or the United States military reserves toward the qualifications required to receive the license or certification in question.

(c) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, if a licensee or certificate holder, under this chapter, is engaged in active service in the armed forces of the United States, as defined in clause Forty-third of [section 7 of chapter 4](#), the license or certification held by that licensee or certificate holder shall remain valid until the licensee or certificate holder is released from active duty and for a period of not less than 90 days following that release.

(d) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the commissioner of public health and each of the boards of registration and examination under the supervision of the commissioner, shall upon presentation of satisfactory evidence by an applicant for certification or licensure, expedite the issuance of a license or certification to a person: (i) who is certified or licensed in a state other than the commonwealth; (ii) whose spouse is a member of the armed forces in the United States; (iii) whose spouse is the subject of a military transfer to the commonwealth; and (iv) who left employment to

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accompany the person's spouse to the commonwealth. The procedure shall include, but not be limited to: (1) issuing the person a license or certificate if, in the opinion of the department, the requirements for licensure or certification of such other state are substantially equivalent to the requirements for licensure or certification in the commonwealth; or (2) issuing the person a temporary license or certificate to allow the person to perform services while completing any specific requirements that may be required in the commonwealth but were not required in the state in which the person was licensed or certified.

(e) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the director and each of the boards of registration and examination under the supervision of the director, shall upon the presentation of satisfactory evidence by an applicant for certification or licensure, expedite the issuance of a license or certification for a person: (i) who is certified or licensed in a state other than the commonwealth; (ii) whose spouse is a member of the armed forces in the United States; (iii) whose spouse is the subject of a military transfer to the commonwealth; and (iv) who left employment to accompany a spouse to the commonwealth. The procedure shall include, but not be limited to: (1) issuing the person a license or certificate if, in the opinion of the department, the requirements for licensure or certification of such other state are substantially equivalent to the requirements for licensure or certification in the commonwealth; or (2) issuing the person a temporary license or certificate to allow the person to perform services while completing any specific requirements that may be required in the commonwealth but were not required in the state in which the person was licensed or certified.

SECTION 9. The second paragraph of [section 46A of chapter 114 of the General Laws](#), as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the first sentence and inserting in the place thereof the following 2 sentences:- A certified copy of the affidavit shall be transmitted by the undertaker or other person authorized to make the burial or disposition, within 30 days of the burial or disposition, to the veterans' agent or part-time veterans' agent of the city or town of burial or other disposition of the body. Upon receipt of the certified copy, the veterans' agent or part-time veterans' agent shall transmit the certified copy to the veterans' graves officer, appointed under section 9 of chapter 115, of the city or town of burial or other disposition of the body.

SECTION 10. [Section 2 of chapter 115 of the General Laws](#), as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "commissioner", in line 1, the following words:- shall be a veteran, as defined in clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4 and.

SECTION 11. [Section 71C of chapter 143 of the General Laws](#), as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "licensee", in line 45, the following words:- ; provided, however, that if the licensee is on active duty with the armed forces of the United States, the license shall remain valid until the licensee is released from active duty and for a period of not less than 90 days following that release.

SECTION 12. [Section 62 of chapter 146 of the General Laws](#), as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "certificate", in line 26, the following words:- ; provided, however, that if the

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holder of a certificate of competency is on active duty with the armed forces of the United States, the certificate shall remain valid until the holder is released from active duty and for a period of not less than 90 days following that release.

SECTION 13. [Section 67 of said chapter 146](#), as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting, after the word "licensee", in line 21, the following words:- ; provided, however, that if the licensee is on active duty with the armed forces of the United States, the license shall remain valid until the licensee is released from active duty and for a period of not less than 90 days following that release.

SECTION 14. [Section 85 of said chapter 146](#), as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "licensee", in line 33, the following words:- ; provided, however, that if the licensee is on active duty with the armed forces of the United States, the license shall remain valid until the licensee is released from active duty and for a period of not less than 90 days following that release.

SECTION 14A. [Chapter 147 of the General Laws](#) is hereby amended by inserting after section 61 the following section:-

Section 62. (a) The commissioner shall coordinate and adopt a uniform policy within the department to, upon presentation of satisfactory evidence by an applicant for certification or licensure under the authority of the department, accept education, training or service completed by an individual as a member of the armed forces, as defined in clause Forty-third of [section 7 of chapter 4](#), or the United States military reserves toward the qualifications required to receive the license or certification in question.

(b) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, if a licensee or certificate holder, who received a license or certificate under the authority of the department, is engaged in active service in the armed forces of the United States, as defined in clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4, the license or certification held by that licensee or certificate holder shall remain valid until the licensee or certificate holder is released from active duty and for a period of not less than 90 days following that release.

(c) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the commissioner shall establish a procedure within the department to, upon the presentation of satisfactory evidence by an applicant for certification or licensure under the authority of the department, expedite the issuance of a license or certification for a person: (i) who is certified or licensed in a state other than the commonwealth; (ii) whose spouse is a member of the armed forces in the United States; (iii) whose spouse is the subject of a military transfer to the commonwealth; and (iv) who left employment to accompany a spouse to the commonwealth. The procedure shall include, but not be limited to: (1) issuing the person a license or certificate if, in the opinion of the department, the requirements for licensure or certification of the other state are substantially equivalent to the requirements for licensure or certification in the commonwealth; or (2) issuing the person a temporary license or certificate to allow the person to perform services while completing any specific requirements that may be required in the commonwealth but were not required in the state in which the person was licensed or certified.

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SECTION 15. [Section 5 of chapter 188 of the General Laws](#), as appearing in the 2010 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following subsection:-

(e) The declaration of homestead shall recite whether the owner, the owner's spouse or other family member to be benefitted is a servicemember who may be subject to protection under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, 50 U.S.C. app. § 533, should that owner, spouse or family member be called to active duty. A failure to include a recital as to servicemember status shall not affect the validity or enforceability of the declaration and the rights created thereunder.

SECTION 16. [Chapter 276A of the General Laws](#) is hereby amended by adding the following 2 sections:-

Section 10. A probation officer of a district court, in Boston, the municipal court of the city of Boston or the officer's official designee, when gathering information in accordance with [section 85 of chapter 276](#), shall, at or prior to arraignment of a defendant on a criminal complaint, use best efforts to confirm the defendant's status as a veteran, as defined in clause Forty-third of [section 7 of chapter 4](#), a person on active service in the armed forces of the United States, as defined in said clause Forty-third of said [section 7 of said chapter 4](#) or a person with a history of military service in the armed forces of the United States.

The district courts, and in Boston, the municipal court of the city of Boston, shall have jurisdiction to divert to a program any person who is a veteran, as defined in said clause Forty-third of said [section 7 of said chapter 4](#), on active service in the armed forces of the United States, as defined in said clause Forty-third of said [section 7 of said chapter 4](#), or who has history of military service in the armed forces of the United States who is charged with an offense against the commonwealth for which a term of imprisonment may be imposed, regardless of age, who has not previously been convicted of a violation of any law of the commonwealth or of any other state or of the United States in any criminal court proceeding after having reached the age of 18 years, except for traffic violations for which no term of imprisonment may have been imposed, who does not have any outstanding warrants, continuances, appeals or criminal cases pending before any courts of the commonwealth or any other state or of the United States and who has received a recommendation from a program that such person would, in light of the capacities of and guidelines governing it, benefit from participation in said program.

Section 11. A defendant who is determined to be a veteran, on active service or has a history of military service in the armed forces of the United States and who is eligible for diversion or treatment under section 10 may, at arraignment, be afforded a 14-day continuance by the court to seek an assessment by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the department of veterans' services or another state or federal agency with suitable knowledge and experience of veterans affairs to provide the court with treatment options available to the defendant, including diversion programs, if appropriate. If the defendant has demonstrated symptomatology suggestive of a mental illness, a qualified psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or physician shall, in consultation with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the department of veterans' services or another federal or state agency, provide a written report to the court to assist in sentencing or diversion. The court may consider the recommendations of any diagnosing or treating licensed mental health professional for

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the defendant for pre-trial diversion or the imposition of a sentence. Prior to offering a continuance, the court shall inquire into the circumstances of the charge.

If the court offers a 14-day continuance to seek an assessment and a defendant chooses to accept the offer of a continuance, the defendant shall notify the court at arraignment. Upon receipt of such notification, the judge may grant a 14-day continuance. The court, through the probation office or the officer's official designee, shall direct the defendant to an assessment program, shall inform the program of the action and shall require that the program provide the probation department and court with its findings. A court may grant a defendant who is preliminarily determined not to be eligible for pre-trial diversion a 14-day continuance for assessment. The court shall consider the opinion of the commonwealth on the merits of granting or denying the continuance. A court may grant a continuance sua sponte or upon motion by the defendant.

SECTION 17. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the board of registration of funeral directors and embalmers shall adopt and promulgate all necessary rules, regulations and procedures to implement the provisions of [section 46A of chapter 114 of the General Laws](#) including, but not limited to, regulations ensuring that the undertaker or other person authorized to make the burial or disposition of the body of a deceased veteran, known to be such, shall notify the veterans' agent or part-time veterans' agents, as defined in [section 1 of chapter 115](#), of the city or town of burial or other disposition of the body. In developing such rules and regulations, the board shall consult with the department of veterans' services.

SECTION 18. The executive office of health and human services, in consultation with the executive office for administration and finance, department of veterans' services, the Soldiers' Home in Massachusetts and the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke shall conduct a fiscal and operational analysis of the impact of designating a non-profit entity as a state soldiers home or assisted living facility. The analysis shall examine the availability of federal, state or private funds to support the construction and operation of additional soldiers' homes or assisted living facilities by the designated non-profit entity, including unused federal per diems under current United States Department of Veterans Affairs apportionment guidelines, provide a 5-year and 10-year master plan for capital facility improvements and expansion and estimate long-term costs that may be incurred by the commonwealth for the construction and ongoing maintenance of such a home or assisted living facility. The executive office of health and human services shall submit a copy of the analysis to the clerks of the house of representatives and senate who shall forward copies of the analysis to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs by December 1, 2012.

SECTION 19. There shall be a special commission to study and make recommendations under [chapters 13 and 115 of the General Laws](#) and titles 108 and 230 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations, relative to the training and the certification, professional licensure or accreditation of veterans' benefits and services officers.

The commission shall consist of 6 members: the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on

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veterans and federal affairs or their designees, who shall serve as co-chairs; the secretary of veterans' services or a designee; the undersecretary of consumer affairs and business regulation or a designee; the president of the Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association or a designee; and the executive director of the Massachusetts Municipal Association or a designee.

The commission shall: (i) review and analyze processes and procedures of the department of veterans' services relative to the training or certification of veterans' benefits and services officers; (ii) review and analyze processes and procedures of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs relative to the training and accreditation of representatives of veterans and military service organizations; (iii) review and analyze processes and procedures for the establishment of professional licensure for veterans' benefits and services officers within the commonwealth; and (iv) compile and issue a report of the study with recommendations for legislation relative to the training and the certification, professional licensure or accreditation of veterans' benefits and services officers. As used in this section, the term "veterans' benefits and services officers" shall include: (i) full-time and part-time veterans' agents under chapter 115 of the General Laws, chapter 471 of the acts of 1972, chapter 68 of the acts of 1984 and title 108 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations; (ii) full-time directors of veterans' services districts and full-time and part-time deputy directors or assistant directors of veterans' services districts under said chapter 115 of the General Laws, said chapter 471 of the acts of 1972, said chapter 68 of the acts of 1984 and title 108 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations; (iii) county veterans' agents under chapter 128 of the acts of 1982; and (iv) the veterans' benefits and services commissioner in and for the city of Boston under said [chapter 115 of the General Laws](#).

The commission shall convene its first official meeting not later than August 1, 2012. The commission shall submit a copy of the study with recommendations for legislation to the clerks of the house of representatives and senate who shall forward copies of the study to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs by December 1, 2012.

SECTION 20. The court administrator shall, in consultation with the department of veterans services, conduct a study and make recommendations relative to the adoption of a court training program to educate and assist court personnel, including court staff, probation officers and their designees, court officers, prosecutors, defense counsel and judges in recognizing veterans issues and determining the appropriate treatment for veterans within the court. The administrative office of the trial court shall file a report with recommendations for a court training program to the joint committee on the judiciary, the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs and the house and senate committees on ways and means by June 1, 2013.

SECTION 21. The court administrator shall consult with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the department of veterans' services, to conduct a study to examine the intake and review process and disposition, including treatment and diversion options, of veterans, persons on active service in the armed forces of the United States and persons with a history of military service in the armed forces of the United States who face criminal complaints in the courts. The study shall include specific information including, but not limited to, the number of defendants who are veterans,

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servicemembers or have a history of military service who enter the courts of the commonwealth each year, the number who are eligible to enter treatment and diversion programs, the number screened and assessed for placement in a program, the number that successfully complete a program, the number that do not complete a program and the reason for such incompleteness, the number that are diverted to a program and obtain a dismissal of their court proceedings and the number that enter and complete a program but reoffend and enter the criminal court system again within 1 year of successful completion. The study shall provide recommendations for annual reporting requirements to be provided by the administrative office of the trial court related to veterans in the criminal justice system. The report shall be provided by the court administrator to the department of veterans' services, the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs and the joint committee on the judiciary not later than April 1, 2013. Reporting shall be provided annually by the court administrator to the department and the committees on or before December 1 of each year thereafter.

SECTION 22. The court administrator shall, in consultation with the department of veteran services and the department of children and families, conduct a study and make recommendations relative to legal or physical custody or parenting time during the time a parent is on active military duty. Said study shall include a review of any recommendations provided for by the Department of Defense and include an analysis of prohibitions on permanent custody orders during deployment, limitations on the use of past or future deployment in making custody determinations and other protections including, but not limited to, expedited custody hearings, delegated custody rights and electronic testimony and visitations. The court administrator shall file the results of its study along with any recommendations with the joint committee on the judiciary and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs by June 1, 2013.

SECTION 23. The board of higher education shall adopt all necessary rules, regulations and procedures to implement [section 42 of chapter 15A of the General Laws](#) not later than March 1, 2013.

Approved, May 31, 2012.



Acts
2009
CHAPTER 132 AN ACT PROVIDING BENEFITS TO VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to provide forthwith benefits to certain veterans and service members, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 33 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting after section 67 the following section:-

Section 67A. There shall be a medal of liberty which shall be awarded to the next of kin of service men and women from the commonwealth killed in action or who died as a result of wounds received in action. The adjutant general and 2 field grade officers of the armed forces of the commonwealth detailed by the commander-in-chief shall constitute a commission to make recommendations to the commander-in-chief for the awarding of the medal of liberty.

SECTION 2. The last sentence of subsection (d) of section 4 of chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2008 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following words:- , the secretary of veterans' services and local veterans' service officers.

SECTION 3. Section 95 of chapter 54 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2008 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the third paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

Federal write-in absentee ballots shall be received and counted as provided in section 103 of the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. section 1973ff-2, for any preliminary, primary or general election for federal, state, city, town, county or district office or any ballot question. Federal write-in absentee ballots received for state and city final elections shall be counted only at the public meeting of the registrars held under the preceding paragraph, and only if no valid state ballot has been received from the same voter, but shall be counted even if the voter has not applied for a state absent voter ballot or if the voter's application was received after the thirtieth day before the election.

SECTION 4. Said section 95 of said chapter 54, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by adding the following 3 paragraphs:-

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Federal write-in absentee ballots from absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters as defined in section 107 of said Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act that are transmitted by email or facsimile as permitted by this section, shall be counted for federal, state, city, town, county or district offices at any preliminary, primary or general election or any ballot question so long as they are received by the city or town clerk before the hour fixed for closing the polls as provided in section 93, but only if no valid state ballot has been received from the same voter; provided, however, that section 99 shall apply to federal write-in absentee ballots sent by mail; and provided further, that a federal write-in absentee ballot shall be counted even if the voter has not applied for a state absent voter ballot or if the voter's application was received after the thirtieth day before the election. Federal write-in absentee ballots received for preliminary, primary, county, district, city and town elections shall be processed in the office of the registrars after the hour of the closing of the polls and the registrars shall amend each precinct tally sheet to include the counted federal write-in absentee ballots.

Absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters may mail, email or send by facsimile, a completed federal write-in absentee ballot directly to local election officials or use transmission services provided and administered through the Federal Voting Assistance Program, or any successor program. Email or facsimile transmissions of a federal write-in absentee ballot shall include a completed form approved by the Federal Voting Assistance Program, or any successor program, declaring that the voter voluntarily waives the right to a secret ballot. Failure to include such form shall not invalidate the ballot.

The secretary of state shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of this section to establish procedures for electronic transmission, including email and facsimile transmissions, of election materials.

SECTION 5. Section 26 of chapter 149 of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out, in lines 7 to 9, inclusive, the words "male veterans as defined in clause Forty-third of section seven of chapter four, and who are qualified to perform the work to which the employment relates" and inserting in place thereof the following words:- veterans as defined in clause Forty-third of section 7 of chapter 4 and who are qualified to perform the work to which the employment relates and, within such preference, preference shall be given to service-disabled veterans.

SECTION 6. Said section 26 of said chapter 149, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the word "district", in line 17, the following words:- and, within such preference, preference shall be given to service-disabled veterans.

SECTION 7. The executive office of health and human services, in consultation with the department of veterans' services and the Massachusetts commission against discrimination, shall conduct a disparities study examining the history of service-disabled veterans in the commonwealth. The study shall examine factors including, but not limited to, the employment opportunities for service-disabled

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veterans, and any other forms of discrimination in the awarding of state contracts. The report shall provide recommendations for remedying any discovered discrimination. The executive office shall file the report not later than November 11, 2010 with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate who shall forward the same to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs.

SECTION 8. The executive office of health and human services, in consultation with the executive office for administration and finance and the department of veterans' services, shall study the current capacity to provide appropriate health care services for Massachusetts veterans and assess the necessity and feasibility of expanding capacity at current soldiers' homes or for establishing additional soldiers' homes in the commonwealth. The study shall examine factors including, but not limited to, the current and projected populations of veterans, the geographical distribution of the populations and the needs of the populations. The study shall assess potential funding mechanisms for expanded capacity at current soldiers' homes or for the construction and operation of additional soldiers' homes, including the availability of federal, state or private funds. The executive office of health and human services shall file the report not later than November 11, 2010 with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate who shall forward the same to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs.

SECTION 9. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of veterans' services, in consultation with the secretary of administration and finance, shall issue a request for proposals for one or more private entities to construct, purchase and operate public homes for veterans. Such homes shall be considered "state veterans' homes". The construction, purchase and operation of state veterans' homes shall be funded from available federal and private funds. The primary purpose of such state veterans' homes is to provide support and care for veterans who served in the Armed Forces of the United States for no less than 180 days.

The secretary of veterans' services shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of this section to the degree necessary to achieve maximum federal financial participation within 90 days after the effective date of this act. The request for proposals shall be issued within 60 days of such rules and regulations being adopted. The department of veterans' services may determine that no proposals are responsive or may determine that no responsive proposals provide adequate value to the commonwealth. If the department of veterans' services determines that no proposals are responsive or no responsive proposals provide adequate value to the commonwealth, the department shall notify the legislature of the reasons for such findings in writing within 60 days of such decision. All actions relative to requests for proposals under this section shall comply with sections 52 to 55, inclusive, of chapter 7 of the General Laws.

SECTION 10. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, veterans who reside in the commonwealth and are honorably discharged from the armed services may be exempted from apprenticeship, school and other requirements to acquire a permit or license to perform work in an area requiring a license that relates to specific military experience. Individual state licensing boards

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shall promulgate rules and regulations to award veterans' exemptions from requirements or credits towards licensure for all related military experience and schooling in the area in which the veteran seeks to be licensed. The rules and regulations shall include, but not be limited to, accepting all or a portion of a veteran's military training and work experience in lieu of apprenticeship requirements.

SECTION 11. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, a resident of the commonwealth who is sent overseas as a member of the United States Armed Forces and is eligible to receive benefits pursuant to section 16 of chapter 130 of the acts of 2005 may receive such benefits each time he is deployed; provided, however, that an eligible resident shall receive the full bonus allowed by said section 16 of said chapter 130 upon return after his first deployment and 50 per cent of the bonus after each subsequent deployment, provided that appropriated funding is available and the state treasurer certifies that the relevant account has sufficient funds to maintain such an initiative. The state treasurer shall annually provide a status report on the account to the secretary of veterans' services, the secretary of administration and finance, the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs.

SECTION 12. (a) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there shall be a veterans' hall of fame council to study the feasibility of establishing a veterans' hall of fame in the commonwealth. The commission shall consist of 11 members, who shall be the president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives or their designees who shall serve as co-chairs, the minority leaders of the senate and house of representatives or their designees, the senate and house chairs of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or their designees, the adjutant general of the national guard or his designee, the secretary of veterans' services or his designee, the state superintendent of state office buildings or his designee and 2 persons to be appointed by the governor who shall be honorably-discharged veterans. Members shall serve without compensation. (b) The council shall review and analyze the feasibility of, and costs associated with, establishing a veterans' hall of fame in the commonwealth and shall study reasonable methods and criteria that may be utilized for nominating and inducting veterans who are residents of the commonwealth into the veterans' hall of fame. (c) The commission shall submit its finding and recommendations for establishing a veterans' hall of fame in the commonwealth by filing the same not later than November 11, 2010 with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate, the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs.

SECTION 13. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, there shall be a special commission to study the feasibility and costs of establishing a functional magnetic resonance imaging and neuropsychological cognitive testing program for all military forces of the commonwealth prior to and upon return from deployment.

The commission shall consist of 12 members, who shall be the secretary of veterans' services or his designee, who shall serve as chair of the commission, the president of the senate and the speaker of

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the house or their designees, the minority leaders of the senate and house of representatives or their designees, the senate and house chairs of the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs or their designees, the adjutant general of the national guard or his designee, the secretary of health and human services or his designee, the secretary of administration and finance or his designee, and 2 persons to be appointed by the governor, both of whom shall be honorably-discharged veterans who are residents of the commonwealth. The members shall serve without compensation.

The commission shall report to the general court not later than November 11, 2010 the result of its investigation and study and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry its recommendations into effect by filing the same with the clerks of the house of representatives and senate who shall forward the same to the house and senate committees on ways and means and the joint committee on veterans and federal affairs.

SECTION 14. Notwithstanding any general or special law, rule or regulation to the contrary, active service members of the armed forces who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements of 108 C.M.R. 11.01 to receive a bonus for participation in operations Desert Shield or Desert Storm, shall be permitted to receive said bonus; provided, however, that sufficient funds are available in the relevant account.

SECTION 15. The state secretary shall immediately notify the program director for the Federal Voting Assistance Program or any successor program or his designee of all changes affecting absentee voting procedures of absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters provided for in sections 3 and 4.

Approved November 11, 2009.



A Report of the Special Commission to Study and Investigate the Hidden Wounds of War on Massachusetts Service Members

Commission Members

Senator Stephen Brewer	Lt. Governor Timothy Murray
Senator Thomas McGee	Mr. Thomas Hannon
Senator Gale Candaras	District Attorney William Keating
Senator Scott Brown	Major David Hencke
Representative Anthony Verga	Chief Richard Wilcox
Representative Harold Naughton	Mr. Stephen Fratalia
Representative Ruth Balser	Susan Skea, M.D.
Representative Charles Murphy	Mr. Karl Ackerman
Representative Linda Campbell	Mr. Francisco Ureña
Representative Elizabeth Poirier	

The report is dedicated in memory of

Jeffery Lucey, United State Marine Corps Reserve, Operation Iraqi Freedom

&

Jeff Kinlin, United States Army, 82nd Airborne

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I. Commission Members & Staff

The Commission consisted of nineteen members who collectively represent the Massachusetts State Senate and House of Representatives, the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, the Commissioner of Probation, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services, and five members appointed by the Governor, including representatives of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association, the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association, and the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association.



Senator Stephen Brewer-(D) represents the district of Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin. The Senator serves on the following Committees: Senate Committee on Ways and Means; Public Safety and Homeland Security; Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. He serves as Vice-Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and of Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security and is Chair of the State Administration and Regulatory Oversight Committee. He is also the Co-chair of the *Special Commission to Study and Investigate the Hidden Wounds of War on Massachusetts Service Members*.



Senator Thomas McGee-(D) represents the district of Third Essex and Middlesex. The Senator serves on the following Committees: Veterans and Federal Affairs; Labor and Workforce Development; Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; Community Development and Small Business; Judiciary; Transportation. He serves as the Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, as well as the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, and is Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.



Senator Gale Candaras-(D) represents the district of First Hampden and Hampshire. The Senator serves on the following Committees: Mental Health and Substance Abuse; Elder Affairs; Public Safety and Homeland Security; Public Service; Health Care Financing. She serves as the Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse and the Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs.



Senator Scott Brown-(R) represents the district of Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex. He is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Massachusetts National Guard. The Senator serves on the following Committees: Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure; Education; Election Laws; Financial Services; Health Care Financing; Veterans and Federal Affairs.



Representative Anthony Verga-(D) represents the Fifth Essex District. The Representative has served as the Chair of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs since its inception in 2005. He is a Korean War Era veteran of the United States Navy. Representative Verga is the Co-Chair of the *Special Commission to Study and Investigate the Hidden Wounds of War on Massachusetts Service Members*.



Representative Harold Naughton-(D) represents the Twelfth Worcester District. He is a member of the U.S. Army Reserve and was deployed at part of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2005-2006. The Representative serves on the following Committees: House Committee on Ways and Means; Judiciary; Public Safety and Homeland Security. He is the Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security.



Representative Ruth Balsler-(D) represents the Twelfth Middlesex District. The Representative is the Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse.



Representative Charles Murphy-(D) represents the Twenty-First Middlesex District. The Representative serves on the following Committees: Veterans and Federal Affairs; Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets. He is the Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets. The Representative joined the US Marine Corps, where he served from 1989 to 1994 and rose to the rank of Captain.



Representative Linda Dean Campbell-(D) represents the Fifteenth Essex District. As a veteran, served as a paratrooper and an Intelligence Officer with VIII Airborne Corps. The Representative serves on the following Committees: Revenue; Telecommunication, Utilities and Energy; Veterans and Federal Affairs.



Representative Elizabeth Poirier-(R) represents the Fourteenth Bristol District. The Representative serves on the following Committees: House Committee on Steering, Policy and Scheduling; Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets; Elder Affairs; Veterans and Federal Affairs.



Lt. Governor Timothy Murray is Governor Patrick's designee on the *Special Commission to Study and Investigate the Hidden Wounds of War on Massachusetts Service Members*. Prior to his election as Lieutenant Governor, he was first elected to the Worcester City Council in 1997 and became mayor in 2001. He served as mayor of Massachusetts' second largest city for three terms. The Lt. Governor also chairs the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services.

Mr. Thomas Hannon is Director of the Boston Vets Center and serves as the Vice-chair of the Commission. Mr. Hannon, a Vietnam veteran, is also a former Hospital Corpsman and Purple Heart recipient. Director Hannon is representing the Secretary of Veterans' Services.



District Attorney William R. Keating was elected in 1998 to the post of Norfolk District Attorney. Prior to his election, he served as the State Senator from the Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth District. Senator Keating represented this district from 1985 to 1998. From 1977 to 1984, he served as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. In 2005, DA Keating initiated First Responder awareness training regarding the readjustment needs of new veterans and their families. This program was adopted by the Office of the Commissioner of Probation and has been a model for similar efforts nationwide. DA Keating is representing the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association and serves as the Commission's Secretary.

Major David Hencke is the Chief of Deployment Cycle Support for the Massachusetts National Guard. The Major is representing the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard, Major General Joseph C. Carter.

Chief Richard Wilcox has served as the Chief of Police for the Stockbridge Police Department for 24 years. His career as a police officer has spanned 38 years in which he has been a strong voice for veterans within the Massachusetts law enforcement community. The Chief is representing the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association.

Mr. Stephen Fratalia is the Director of Resource Management for the Office of the Commissioner of Probation. He has a background in both criminal justice and education and has been involved at the ground level of veterans education and training in the criminal justice system. Mr. Fratalia is representing the Commissioner of Probation, John J. O'Brien.

Susan Skea, M.D., is the Department of Mental Health Southeastern Area Medical Director, and is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Dr. Skea is also a veteran, having been deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and is retired from the United States Army Reserve at the rank of Colonel. Dr. Skea is representing the Department of Mental Health Commissioner Barbara Leadholm.

Mr. Karl Ackerman is the Massachusetts Representative to the National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI) Veterans Council. He also serves as the President of the Transformation Center, which assists people with mental illness by connecting them with local resources. Mr. Ackerman is a 100 percent service-connected Vietnam veteran. He has publically struggled with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and champions efforts to assist other suffering veterans with mental health challenges. Mr. Ackerman is representing the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.



Mr. Francisco Ureña is the Director of Veterans Services for the City of Lawrence, Massachusetts, and an Iraq veteran. He served eight years in the United States Marine Corps and received the Purple Heart. He also received the 2008 Veterans' Service Officer of the Year award from the Department of Veterans' Services. Mr. Ureña is representing the Massachusetts Veterans' Service Officers Association.

Alicia Bandy, Legislative Aide to Senator Stephen Brewer, Sarah Keller-Likins, Committee Director of the legislature's Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, and Travis Murphy, Senior Researcher for the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, all contributed to the researching and drafting of this report. Tanya Skypeck, with the Veterans and Federal Affairs Committee, contributed to the editing and formatting of the report.

II. Commission Scope and Purpose

The Special Commission to Study and Investigate the Hidden Wounds of War on Massachusetts Service Members (Chapter 1 of the Resolves of 2008) was established on April 10, 2008. The Commission is charged with examining the mental health effects of war upon returning Massachusetts servicemembers and identifying best practices in the delivery of services to veterans. This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. The establishment of a mandatory mental health treatment program for National Guard members;
2. The creation of a state military family leave policy for primary caregivers of returning servicemembers;
3. A statewide education training program to assist law enforcement, corrections officers, and other first responders to recognize the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In addition to examining these specific charges, this Commission also focused on the identifying barriers to accessing services and made recommendations on how the Commonwealth could better assist with streamlining delivery and improving outreach at the state level. In writing this report, this Commission also sought to develop a larger framework for dealing with the prevalent issue of mental health for returning veterans.

III. Message From The Chairs

Confronting the Continuing Costs of War-

We wish to thank the countless number of people who shared pieces of their stories with our Commission. We are deeply humbled by the sacrifices made to protect the freedoms which we as citizens too often take for granted. The contributions and sacrifices made by families of these men and women who wear the uniform are truly immeasurable.

The treatment that was given to previous generations of heroes when they came home was despicable. We resolve that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will support its newest generation of veterans both when they are serving and when they come home, as we should have done for those of all wars. We must remember that those who serve are our daughters, sons, uncles, and sisters. They are teachers, police officers, accountants and lawyers. They have seen violence and death and faced tremendous pressures that we cannot imagine. And when these warriors come home, they do not always leave behind their experiences. It is time we recognize that when a warrior reaches out and asks for help that this is an act of bravery.

Today, we as a society have another opportunity to step forward and recognize the responsibility each of us has to those who serve our country. Caring for our Veterans is not discretionary – it is our moral obligation.

While the federal government has historically been the primary resource of active duty military, Veterans and their families, this Commission has closely examined what role a state has in caring for those who have served, particularly in improving mental health care services and accessibility. And while a state's role is not to step in and duplicate the work of the federal government or otherwise fund programs that should be adequately funded at the federal level, a state can and should step forward to identify creative ways to further serve its warriors and their family support systems.

In Massachusetts, we are fortunate to have many existing programs, organizations and individuals that support, and want to continue to support, Veterans and their families. Yet one of the greatest challenges is connecting the two, and the Commission worked to identify ways to improve tangible connections.

As a result of these efforts, the Commission worked with the Legislature and the Governor's Office to continue to keep Massachusetts at the forefront of providing Veterans benefits by proposing collaboration between the Commonwealth and the *SOFAR* and *Give an Hour* programs. These non-profits connect Veterans, servicemembers, families and extended

families with free confidential counseling services by mental health professionals in their region. This public-private collaboration would not only encourage mental health providers and clergy across the state to donate an hour of their time every month to counsel, but bring attention to these services which can help so many.

We thank the Commission members for their contributions to this final report. The following recommendations were made in the best interest of the veterans and military community in Massachusetts. We stand firmly behind these findings and hope this document will serve as both a reminder of the impact of war and as a resource for other states looking to better serve their military community.

SENATOR STEPHEN M. BREWER
Commission Co-chair

REPRESENTATIVE ANTHONY J. VERGA
Commission Co-chair

IV. Acknowledgements

We thank all of the veterans, servicemembers, and families who attended hearings and who participated and contributed to the Commission's work. We honor your requests for personal anonymity but we also recognize the strength it took to share your stories and commend you for giving a voice to so many others. The Commission had an opportunity to hear from Korean and Vietnam era veterans as well as veterans of the Persian Gulf War, and Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

In addition, the Commission received a wealth of information from members, state agencies, and concerned citizens. This information was carefully studied to craft specific recommendations for the legislature, state government agencies and private groups.

A partial list of contributors to the Commission includes:

- Dr. Jaine Darwin and Dr. Kenneth Reich, Co-Directors, Strategic Outreach to Families of all Reservists (SOFAR)
- Dr. Barbara Romberg, Founder and Director, Give an Hour
- George Devlin, Captain, Burlington Police Department
- Andria Nemoda, Supervising Nurse, Burlington Board of Health
- Mr. Steve O'Connor, Director, Northampton Department of Veterans Services
- Mr. John Downing, President and CEO, Soldier On
- Melida Arredondo, Massachusetts Military Families Speak Out
- Ellen Connorton, Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention
- Dr. Gonzalo Vera, Chief of Mental Health Services, VA Medical Center, Leeds, MA
- Mr. Kevin Bowe, Office of Norfolk District Attorney Keating
- Mr. Arley Pett, Director, Gloucester Department of Veterans Services
- Ms. Lucia Amero, Gloucester Department of Veterans Services
- Mr. Richard Girard, Director, Agawam Department of Veterans Services
- Dr. Jean McGuire, Assistant Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services
- John O'Brien, Commissioner, Office of Probation
- Mr. Peter Larkin, Soldier On
- Ms. Susie Husted
- Physicians for Greater Social Responsibility

The Commission also commends all those who responded to requests for information and assistance and participated in developing recommendations. Thank you for the cooperation and assistance you provided and acknowledge the thoughtful and informed contributions you made to the Commission's work. The Commission especially thanks the offices of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services and the Massachusetts National Guard. These dedicated men and women make differences in the lives of the Commonwealth's servicemembers, veterans and their families on a daily basis.

V. Information Gathering

The *Special Commission to Study and Investigate the Hidden Wounds of War on Massachusetts Service Members* held a total of four public hearings. The first two hearings were held at the State House in Boston, Massachusetts. The Commission then conducted two field hearings by which to reach a greater number of veterans and stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth.

The first full meeting of the Commission was held on July 1, 2008, in the Senate Reading Room. The hearing began with a review of *Chapter 1 of the Resolves of 2008*. The meeting then turned to an overview of the Commission's goals and an open discussion. The open discussions revolved around four topics: (1) current practices and services available to veterans, (2) the difficulty in reaching all servicemembers needing assistance, (3) the relationship between the state and local veteran service officers, and (4) ancillary problems linked to mental health issues.

The second Commission hearing, held on July 22, 2008, in Hearing Room B1 of the State House, consisted of a series of formal presentations. These presentations provided background material outlining the readjustment issues facing returning servicemembers, an overview of current practices, and an outline of available resources. Formal presentations were followed by public testimony. Highlights of both the prepared and public testimony included repeated emphasis on education to overcome the stigma associated with mental health issues, and the creation of a dedicated group to continue to address and coordinate the response to veterans' health issues.

The first field hearing was held on September 3, 2008, at the Major Fred W. Ritvo Veterans' Center in Gloucester, Massachusetts. This hearing focused on methods of providing mental health services to a geographically dispersed population. Staff Sergeant Brian Morrill, Massachusetts Army National Guard, began by providing testimony on the difficulties he faced following his most recent deployment. Additional testimony focused on three unique programs providing mental health services to servicemembers and their families: Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services *SAVE* Program; *Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists* ("SOFAR"); and *Give an Hour*. The panelists' presentations were followed by the public testimony of a local Vietnam veteran.

The second field hearing was held on October 7, 2008, at the *Soldier On* facility in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The Commission continued gathering information about innovative methods of providing mental health services to returning servicemembers. Formal testimony was presented by Mr. John Downing, President and CEO of *Soldier On*; Major David Hencke, Massachusetts National Guard Yellow Ribbon Program Coordinator; and Dr. Gonzalo Vera, Chief of Mental Health Services, VA Medical Center, Leeds, Massachusetts. The panelists' testimony was followed by public testimony from a number of veteran service officers and veterans.

VI. Background

A recently published 2007 Rand Corporation study estimated that approximately one-third of previously deployed servicemembers are experiencing significant mental health conditions following redeployment.¹ These mental health conditions include post-traumatic stress disorder (“PTSD”), major depression or a traumatic brain injury (“TBI”) sustained during deployment.²

What these statistics fail to demonstrate are the complexities and interconnectedness of mental health conditions and readjustment issues. Servicemembers and their families are often forced to confront multiple readjustment and mental health issues. These issues, ordered along a continuum, can range from difficulty sleeping to diagnosed PTSD or even suicidal thoughts. In addition, other stressors such as failed personal relationships and financial or legal problems place additional pressures on servicemembers and their families. These stressors too often serve as precipitating factors that lead to suicide. More problematic for service providers is the fact that the issues are not isolated. They often are interconnected and feed off one another forming a seemingly hopeless and unbreakable circle of problems.

Despite the efforts of the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), many servicemembers are not receiving adequate treatment for mental health conditions and other readjustment issues. The effects of untreated mental health problems are detrimental not only to veterans and their families but society as a whole. A number of societal problems can develop from untreated PTSD including increased rates of unemployment, divorce, family violence and incarceration among the veteran population.³

a. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: An Overview

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened.⁴ It is a severe and ongoing emotional reaction to an extreme psychological trauma. The stressor(s) may involve someone’s actual death or a threat to the patient’s or someone else’s life, serious physical injury, or threat to physical and/or psychological integrity, to a degree that usual psychological defenses are incapable of coping. Symptoms of PTSD include persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event, avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, emotional numbing, and symptoms of increased arousal.⁵

¹ Jaycox, Lisa H. Invisible Wounds of War: Summary of Key Findings on Psychological and Cognitive Injuries. Testimony presented before the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs on June 11, 2008.

² Id.

³ Id.

⁴ National Center for PTSD Fact Sheet. http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/fact_shts/fs_what_is_ptsd.html. Last visited October 17, 2008

⁵ For additional information about the symptoms of PTSD visit the National Center for PTSD at <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>.

PTSD is not a new phenomenon. Written accounts of symptoms similar to those associated with PTSD date back to ancient times. It was not until the Civil War that medical literature surrounding the symptoms associated with PTSD began to develop. Significant research on PTSD did not begin until after the Vietnam Conflict. Since that time, PTSD has been observed in all veteran populations dating back to World War II.

b. Traumatic Brain Injury: An Overview

Traumatic brain injury (“TBI”) has been labeled the “signature war wound” of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶ Since the war in Afghanistan began in 2001, more than 2,100 troops have been diagnosed with TBI and it is estimated that an additional 140,000 troops may have suffered concussions, which are classified as a mild TBI.⁷ Blast injuries remain the leading cause of TBI for active duty personnel in war zones.⁸

The Defense and Veterans Head Injury Program (“DVHIP”) defines TBI as “a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain.”⁹ Not all blows to the head result in TBI and resulting injuries can range from mild to severe.¹⁰ A mild TBI is defined as a brief change in mental status or consciousness.¹¹ A more severe TBI is the result of an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after suffering a head injury.¹² TBI symptoms include dizziness, excessive fatigue, irritability, memory or concentration problems, balance problems, or a ringing in the ears.¹³

c. Secondary Effects: A Continuum of Issues Including Suicide and Substance Abuse

There are additional problems associated with PTSD, including substance abuse, feelings of hopelessness, employment and relationship problems and, in the most severe situations, suicide.¹⁴

Suicide remains one of the most dangerous and troubling problems confronting servicemembers and readjustment and mental health service providers. Suicide rates among active duty troops

⁶ Kennedy, Kelly. “Wars Signature Wound”. Army Times Magazine. August 2007; 8:30-35.

⁷ Id.

⁸ Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center Fact Sheet. <http://dvbic.org/public.html/pdfs/dvbic-facts-2007.pdf>. Last visited October 17, 2008.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center Fact Sheet. <http://dvbic.org/public.html/pdfs/dvbic-facts-2007.pdf>. Last visited October 17, 2008.

¹² Id.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ National Center for PTSD Fact Sheet. http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/fact_shts/fs_what_is_ptsd.html. Last visited October 17, 2008.

and veterans have seen a dramatic increase since the beginning of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In a May 2007 estimates, the Veterans Health Administration (“VHA”) estimated that 1,000 veterans receiving VHA care commit suicide each year.¹⁵ Even more troubling are statistics from the Army, which estimate that suicide rates among active duty soldiers in 2008 will outpace 2007’s record high and exceed that of the civilian population.¹⁶

Others, however, have identified the root cause as a more systemic problem with servicemember and veteran mental health service providers. Tom Tarantino, a policy associate with *Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America*, expressed his frustration before a recent Congressional Hearing. “Suicide is the end result of multiple failures in our military and veterans’ mental health care systems. Inadequate mental health screening upon redeployment, professional and personal stigma attached to mental health care, and inadequate VA outreach have brought us to this crisis, with little to no end in sight.”¹⁷

A number of statistics demonstrate the interconnectedness between PTSD and its secondary effects. Testifying before Congress, VA Secretary Dr. James Peake stated that almost 60 percent of veterans receiving care from the VA who have died from suicide had a diagnosis of mental health or substance abuse in their records.¹⁸ Substance abuse disorders arise regularly in soldiers diagnosed with PTSD, with some estimates placing the number as high as 85 percent.¹⁹ This high prevalence of substance abuse is thought to represent servicemembers’ attempts at self-medication.²⁰ It is also important to note that substance abuse disorders are prevalent in servicemembers who have not been diagnosed with PTSD.²¹

d. Implications

¹⁵ Michaud, Michael H. Opening Statement by Hon. Michael H. Michaud, Chairman, a Representative in Congress from the State of Maine. Testimony presented before the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Subcommittee on Health on September 16, 2008.

¹⁶ Tarantino, Tom. Statement of Tom Tarantino, Policy Associate, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. Testimony presented before the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Subcommittee on Health on September 16, 2008.

¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ Peake, James B. Statement of the Honorable James B. Peake, M.D., Secretary U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Testimony presented before the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs on May 6, 2008.

¹⁹ Kanter, Evan. Shock and Awe Hits Home: U.S. Health Costs of the War in Iraq. November 2007.

²⁰ Id.

²¹ Id.

Since September 11, 2001, approximately 30,000 veterans have returned to Massachusetts from active duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism.²² Approximately 35 percent of these individuals are Massachusetts National Guard members, while the remaining 65 percent are reservists or solo returning veterans.²³ If the Rand Corporation's estimates are correct and one in three returning servicemembers experiences significant mental health issues, Massachusetts has a lot of men and women who need assistance. Recognizing the immediate need and the dangerous consequences that lack of assistance would have on individual servicemembers, their families, and communities across the Commonwealth, legislation was passed in April of this year to create the *Commission to Study and Investigate the Hidden Wounds of War on Massachusetts Service members*. This was the first time such a Commission was formed in the Commonwealth since 1981, when a similar Commission was formed to examine the needs of Vietnam War veterans.

²² Application from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for Participation in “The Returning Veterans and Their Families Strategic Planning Conference and Policy Academy”.

²³ Application from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for Participation in “The Returning Veterans and Their Families Strategic Planning Conference and Policy Academy”.

VII. Massachusetts Statistics

This section is included in the report to allow policy-makers in other states to utilize the findings as a meaningful source of data.

Massachusetts Veterans Population

Table 1: Annual Estimates of the Population for the United States, Regions, States, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2007²⁴

Geographic Area	Population Estimates								April 1, 2000	
	July 1, 2007	July 1, 2006	July 1, 2005	July 1, 2004	July 1, 2003	July 1, 2002	July 1, 2001	July 1, 2000	Estimates Base	Census
Massachusetts	6,449,755	6,434,389	6,429,137	6,433,676	6,438,510	6,431,788	6,407,631	6,363,190	6,349,105	6,349,097

Massachusetts National Guard Data (as of December 2008)

Total Strength: 8,264

Army: 6,305

Air: 1,959

(Below as of October 2008 unless otherwise noted)

- 44 armories / facilities in 40 communities across the commonwealth
- Since September 11, 2001, more than 8,200 members have been federally activated and approximately 6,000 have served overseas.
- Currently, 176 members of the Massachusetts National Guard are deployed (as of November 3, 2008).
- Approximately 30 percent of guardmembers have deployed more than once. The average deployment is 12-15 months.
- Approximately 45 percent of Massachusetts Army National Guard members are married and/or have children.

Individuals in Massachusetts Reserve Units – (Provided by the various Reserve component commands as of December 2008)

- Army Reserve – (unavailable at time of print)
- Marine Corps Reserve – approximately 1,000
- Naval Reserve – approximately 450
- Air Force Reserve – approximately 26,000
- Coast Guard – (unavailable at time of print)

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program. <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Last visited October 21, 2008.

VIII. Commission Findings and Recommendations

Significant resources exist to combat the mental health and readjustment issues facing servicemembers and their families. A wealth of federal, state and non-governmental organizations provide both mental health treatment and readjustment services. Despite the significant resources dedicated to this issue, a number of barriers remain which prevent servicemembers and their families from receiving needed services. These barriers are presented as findings in this report.

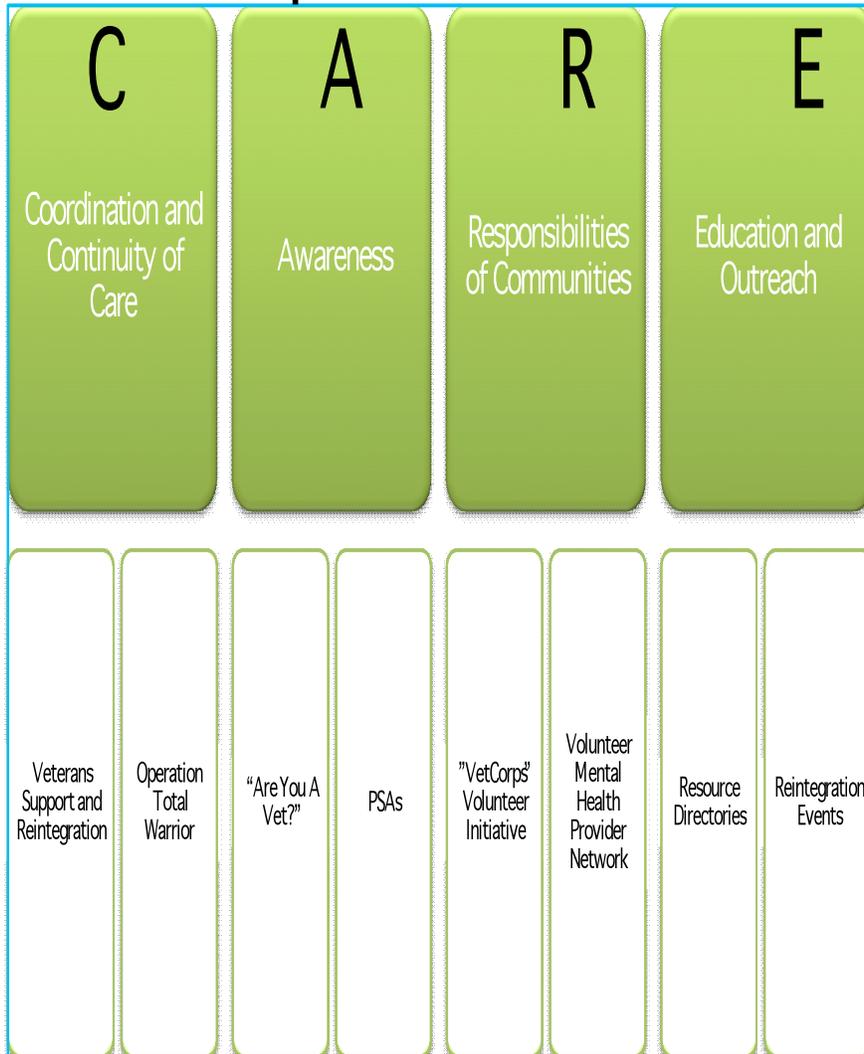
The Commission has concluded that the best way to attack these barriers is through a concerted effort focused on community involvement. As Jack Downing mentioned in testimony before this Commission, "...our Commonwealth, our local communities, and each of us as individual citizens has a role to play in welcoming back and embracing our service men and women." In recognition of this responsibility, the Commission recommends implementation of *Operation CARE*. *Operation CARE* is a four-pronged approach to meeting the mental health and readjustment needs of servicemembers, veterans and their families. Operation CARE would operate under the principle of "serving those who served."

The four key components are:

1. *Coordination of Available Resources and Continuity of Care*
2. *Awareness and Knowledge of Readjustment Issues*
3. *Responsibilities of Communities*
4. *Education and Outreach*

This Commission emphasizes during this time of war the importance of providing for the mental health and readjustment needs of our returning servicemembers, veterans and their families. *Operation CARE* represents the Commission's efforts to embrace the Commonwealth's servicemembers, veterans, and their families.

“Operation CARE”



Finding #1. Coordination of Care

This Commission has determined that there are numerous resources available to combat mental health and readjustment issues. The effective utilization of these existing resources requires both identification and an increase in the coordination of care.

a. Identification of Resources

The Commission was informed about a number of programs providing mental health assistance. They ranged from efforts by the federal government and state agencies, to programs by a variety of creative non-profits. The Commission was presented with a detailed memorandum outlining mental health and substance abuse services for servicemembers and veterans. Information from that memorandum is included below.

Federal Government

Massachusetts currently has 29 federal facilities, including five hospitals, 24 outpatient clinics, and seven Vet Centers.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Chapter 115 Program

Executive Summary – Chapter 115²⁵

Under Chapter 115 of Massachusetts General Laws, the Commonwealth provides a one-of-a-kind-in-the-nation uniform program of financial and medical assistance for indigent veterans and their dependents. Qualifying veterans and their dependents receive necessary financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, fuel, and medical care in accordance with a formula which takes into account the number of dependents and income from all sources. Surviving spouses and eligible dependents of deceased veterans are provided with the same benefits as if the veteran were still living.

In the 18th century, towns in the Massachusetts Bay Colony provided assistance to their needy veterans of the French and Indian War (1754-1763) between France and Great Britain, fought in North America. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts began providing for its veterans immediately following the Revolutionary War. At the start of the Civil War in 1861, the state legislature formalized the assistance provided to veterans by establishing M.G.L. Chapter 115

²⁵ Summary provided by Citizen Information Service. Secretary of the Commonwealth.
<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cisvet/vetbill.htm>. Last visited October 22, 2008.

and the Department of Veterans' Services. In every city and town in the Commonwealth, the legislature created the offices of Director of Veterans' Services, Burial Agent, and Graves Officer, in recognition of the military service and associated sacrifices by its citizens who protected and defended the United States in time of war.

It was the desire of the state and local government leaders to recognize this service by armed forces personnel by providing certain essential benefits to those men and women (both living and deceased) and to their families. Chapter 115 specifies for eligible Massachusetts veterans certain financial, medical, educational, employment, and other benefits. Veterans, their dependents, and surviving spouses receive counsel and assistance dispensed through the 351 municipal veterans services' offices.

Today, M.G.L. Chapter 115 requires every city and town to maintain a Department of Veterans' Services through which the municipality makes available to its residents the part-time or full-time services of either an exclusive or district veterans' service officer. It is the job of that officer to provide veterans (living and deceased) and their dependents access to every federal, state, and local benefit and service to which they are entitled.

Veteran Service Agents/Officers

Executive Summary – Veteran Service Officer

Massachusetts is also the only state in the nation to have a local veterans' service agent/officer ("VSO") for each city and town (some agents/officers service multiple towns). The Commission recognizes that these VSOs are "first responders" to service members and their families. As Staff Sergeant Brian Morrill mentioned in his testimony before the Commission, local VSOs can serve as a "casualty collection point" for veterans needing assistance.

Because of their physical proximity and personal relationships with their communities, the Commission has found that through a VSO is an optimal way to reach out to veterans, servicemembers and their families. In some cases, VSOs identify areas of concern even before a servicemember returns home because of a relationship with the servicemember's family.

The primary responsibility of VSOs has traditionally been to disperse state veterans benefits and assist veterans and their families to access any federal benefits and medical care to which they may be entitled. However, through testimony, the Commission has learned that the current conflict has added a new dynamic for agents/officers. Specifically, stronger ties to national guard and reserve families have developed, even while the servicemember is deployed. An ancillary benefit gained from the establishment of the Welcome Home Bonus is that many returning veterans are drawn to the office of their local VSO to apply. Such face-to-face contact can lead to improved sharing of information and, most importantly, opportunities to ensure that returning veterans are accessing their benefits.

State veterans benefits are distributed by the city or town, which is then reimbursed for 75 percent of the benefit by the state through the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS). The VSOs are responsible for submitting proper paperwork to DVS to receive the reimbursement. Despite the significant state reimbursement to municipalities, veteran's agents have reported to the Commission situations of VSOs feeling pressured to not fully implement the Chapter 115 program because of costs to the community. There are reports that agents/officers felt their employment would be in jeopardy if they fully implemented the Chapter 115 program. The Commission finds this to be a serious impediment to promoting outreach. There is no state statute that specifically provides protection for agents/officers. VSOs are appointed and managed locally, pursuant to section 3 of chapter 115.²⁶

Department of Veterans' Services Statewide Advocacy for Veterans Empowerment (SAVE) Program

A SAVE program was established in Massachusetts in February 2008 through the state's Department of Public Health. The program is not affiliated with the SAVE suicide program in Minnesota. Currently, SAVE is funded through both the state's Department of Veterans' Services budget and the Department of Public Health budget. The Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services described the program as the following in an Executive Summary:

"The primary mission of the SAVE team is Suicide Prevention. SAVE uses a tool (Intake form) to identify the needs of every Veteran and family member of a Veteran that contacts them. This tool is used to ensure accurate identification of the needs of the Veteran and their family and inform them of the resources and benefits that are available to them, whether they be Federal, State, Non-profit or private. Once the outreach coordinator has identified the needs of the Veteran and their family, they then recommend a sequential plan of action in order to successfully address the needs and or benefits that the Veteran has earned.

The extent to which the Outreach Coordinators (OC) involve themselves in the access to the services varies on the capabilities of the Veteran/family member. In a severe case, the Outreach Coordinator may be required to perform such duties as scheduling appointments for the Veteran and or family member because they are mentally and or physically unable to do so. During this process the Outreach coordinator is trying to empower the Veteran and or family member so that they will eventually be able to accomplish their goals independently.

Each case is different as is each Veteran and each family member therefore [sic] each case has a unique plan of action that is developed through the administration of the Intake form with a combination of Peer Outreach that the SAVE team members have infused in their role since they are in fact Peers of the people that they are providing access to services to.

²⁶ See Chapter 115 M.G.L. § 1,3,4,6 for statutory definitions and duties of veteran agents.

If an Outreach Coordinator comes across a Veteran that is at the point where suicide looks like a solution to their problems then the SAVE team is trained to recognize these sign and report what they see to the health professional so that they can address the immediate life threatening needs of that Veteran. When that Veteran is ready to work on all of the issues that are causing these problems SAVE will be there to guide them through and empower them to successfully reintegrate themselves back into life as a successful member of this society.

SAVE Team mission is to advocate for Veterans in need of mental health or counseling services, with the primary mission being suicide prevention. However, as some factors contribute to increased depression such as physical and psychological injuries or illnesses, relationship issues, finances, employment, SAVE team assists with referrals to assistance at the federal, state, and community level. SAVE is able to provide this specialized assistance through its deployment of outreach workers who reach out to Veterans and their families at various locations and events throughout the state. SAVE Team continues to follow up with their Veterans at regular intervals to insure that they are receiving services and care.

SAVE Team does not perform the primary duties of a Veteran Service Officer (VSO). Team members will not take applications for Chapter 115 benefits or act as legal representatives on VA claims. VSOs receive a listing of the Veterans in their communities along with their DD214s on a monthly basis and engage in their own follow up. The SAVE Team has established a close working relationship with many VSOs and, in several instances, it is the VSO who contacts the SAVE team for mental health referral and assistance for the Veterans in their communities.”

Non-Profit Support

The Legislature funds numerous outreach and homeless non-profit organizations across the Commonwealth. These organizations receive funding through various sources but all are supported by the state in some capacity. Their services may include assistance with applying for federal and state veterans' benefits, various counseling services, food and clothing, transportation services, temporary or permanent shelter, substance abuse programs and numerous other services.

The following veterans non-profit organizations were funded in the Legislature’s Fiscal Year 2009 budget (not all provide counseling or mental health care):

Veterans Hospice Homestead (Leominster) and Veterans Hospice (Fitchburg)
Unity House Homeless Veterans’ Residence – Gardner
Southeastern Veterans Housing Program, Inc. – New Bedford
Springfield Bilingual Veterans Outreach Center – Springfield
Transition House in Springfield – Springfield
Massachusetts Shelter for Homeless Veterans – Worcester

Habitat P.L.U.S. – Lynn
Our Neighbor’s Table – Amesbury
The Mansion – Haverhill
Homestead Program – Hyannis
Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse – Dorchester
Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse – Roxbury
Turner House – Williamstown
New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans – Boston
Veteran’s Oral History Project at the Morse Institute Library – Natick
Montachusett Veterans’ Outreach Center – Gardner
Veterans Association of Bristol County – Fall River
Metrowest/Metrosouth Outreach Center – Framingham
Nathan Hale Foundation of Plymouth – Plymouth
Cape Cod Free Clinic and Community Health Center – Falmouth
Veterans Northeast Outreach Center – Haverhill
NamVets of the Cape and Islands – Hyannis
Puerto Rican Veterans Associations of Massachusetts – Boston area
Middleboro Veterans Outreach Center – Middleboro
United Veterans of America/Soldier On – Berkshire County
North Shore Veterans Counseling Center – Beverly
Central Massachusetts Veterans Outreach Center – Worcester
54 th Massachusetts Volunteers and the Colored Ladies

Additional Resources Focused on Providing Mental Health Care for the Military Community

There are several mental health resources for family members of servicemembers. Some are through military channels; others are free service provided outside the military. The Commission received information about the following:

- Military One Source
- Strategic Outreach of Families of All Reservists (SOFAR)
- Give an Hour
- Operation Military Kids

b. Coordination of Care

Resource coordination is vital to effective mental health and readjustment service provision. Without proper coordination, the resources identified by this Commission provide limited value to servicemembers and their families. Proper coordination is an effective method of eliminating gaps in care. The federal government has recognized this barrier and taken action to provide

more effective coordination of care. The *National Defense Authorization Act of 2008* mandated that all states provide comprehensive reintegration services to any veteran, however primarily for returning Reserve component servicemembers.²⁷ This recently created reintegration program, known as the “Yellow Ribbon Program,” is administered through the various National Guard Joint Force Headquarters. The Massachusetts National Guard has embraced this mission and established *Operation Total Warrior*, the DoD’s “Yellow Ribbon” program in Massachusetts. The following excerpt is an executive summary of Operation Total Warrior, provided by Major David Hencke on behalf of the Massachusetts National Guard Operation Total Warrior Program:

Massachusetts National Guard Operation Total Warrior (“Yellow Ribbon Program”)

“The “Yellow Ribbon” program is a congressionally mandated provision of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 which directs the establishment of the Office of Reintegration Programs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The purpose of this office is to meet the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of returning veterans and their families with an emphasis on servicemember care and retention. The Office of Reintegration Programs leverages the presence of National Guard commands in each state to reach out to all servicemembers and families via newly established Deployment Cycle Support Teams within the J1/Personnel Directorate of each state.

The Deployment Cycle Support (“DCS”) team’s task is to support Reserve component servicemembers throughout all phases of mobilization including pre-mobilization team building and support, family strength sustainment; and post-mobilization reintegration services via referrals, information distribution, and active outreach. The focus is primarily on Reserve component servicemembers, but will support any veteran as needed. The DCS team in Massachusetts works closely with the Family Programs staff as well as federal, state, and local agencies to accomplish their mission. The DCS teams’ and Family Programs’ staff accomplish this task by conducting innovative pre-deployment and reintegration events seminars at approximately six months prior to mobilization and 45 after the unit returns, through the “Service Member and Family Support Center” at the Wellesley Armory.”

Recommendation #1. Coordination of Care

The Commission recommends the following:

Veterans Support and Reintegration –

- **Veterans Support and Reintegration** – The Commission recommends that the new “Yellow Ribbon Program” work in conjunction with the Governor’s Advisory Council on

²⁷ National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, Sec. 683. National Guard Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program.

Veterans Services, the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs and members of the Special Commission to further develop programs and seminars in support of deploying Reserve Component units, individual, and their families. The Commission suggests that the *Total Warrior/Yellow Ribbon Program* issue recommendations to the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs regarding legislative steps the state can take to support this federal initiative.

- **VSO Training and Certification** – The Commission listened to overwhelming discussion across the state about differences in services provided by VSOs. The Commission recommendations have centered upon continuity of care between service providers, particularly within the state. As part of this, the Commission recognizes the DVS for providing annual trainings and the important role they play in education.

To ensure that all VSOs have a firm understanding of the laws of the Commonwealth, as well as federal laws, pertaining to veterans, the Commission has identified state VSO certification as the next step in training. VSOs should have the tools to be able to follow and execute these laws to the fullest extent and have knowledge of policies and procedures of the Department of Veterans Affairs in order to serve as “first responders.”

The Commission recommends that VSOs be professionally certified by the state to ensure that all necessary actions are taken to provide veterans, servicemembers and families the highest possible care and services at the local level. Such certification shall standardize the delivery of services, similar to the benchmark given to other professionals such as realtors, teachers, and social workers. All professional exams serve to reflect best practices of the industry.

The Commission supports continuation of the annual VSO trainings provided by DVS and which are funded by the legislature. The Commission further advises all municipalities to require their VSOs to attend at a minimum one annual training per year. The state funding for trainings ensures that costs for mileage, lodging and a food stipend are reimbursed to the municipality.

Additionally, the Commission recommends that the Department of Veterans’ Services in consultation with the Massachusetts Veterans’ Service Officers Association (“MVSOA”) and the Commonwealth’s Human Resources Division further examine what steps are needed to establish professional certification of a VSO. Such recommendations should be reported to the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs and the Governor’s Advisory Council on Veterans’ Services (“GACVS”). Such a report will include addressing the questions presented by DVS to the Commission on this matter.

- **SAVE Program Coordination Mission** – Through testimony from DVS, the Commission learned that the SAVE program has connected with more than 700 veterans

across the Commonwealth. DVS has identified the role of the SAVE Program as a referral service (as opposed to a service-provider) for newly returning veterans in crisis which operates on the principle of peer-to-peer interaction.

The Commission recommends that DVS shall define in its regulations (108 CMR) the role and scope of the SAVE Program and its Team members. This will serve to further familiarize VSOs and state outreach programs with SAVE's resources.

Additionally, the Commission continues to focus on maximizing cooperation between service-providers. While certain privacy laws prevent direct sharing of personal information, the Commission recommends that every SAVE client be provided with a palm card identifying their local VSO's name, contact information, and list of local resources when initial contact is made with the client. In turn, each VSO's office shall have information available about the SAVE program. The Commission also encourages all service providers to further examine creative ways to improve outreach and interaction with each other to better serve the veteran.

The Commission further recommends that the DVS in conjunction with the Department of Public Health and other agencies that DVS may identify, submit a bi-annual report on April 1st and September 1st to the secretary of administration and finance, the house and senate committees on ways and means, and the joint committees on veterans and federal affairs, public health, and mental health and substance abuse, detailing the state's mental health outreach efforts geared specifically for veterans and families. This report should identify if and how each program interacts with corresponding federal programs. Additionally, this report should include the status of specific SAVE casework/referrals, type of contact made, and a budget analysis of the program. This report should, while keeping in line with the standard federal privacy guidelines, allow policymakers to identify tangible benchmarks reached by these programs. In a time when fiscal challenges face the Commonwealth, the Commission seeks to highlight and better understand the state's role in protecting its most at risk veterans.

Finding #2. Awareness and Knowledge of Readjustment Issues

The Commission found that there is a need to raise the awareness level and knowledge of the public regarding readjustment issues faced by returning servicemembers and their families. This awareness would both help erase the stigma currently associated with receiving mental health care and ensure those in contact with servicemembers are able to properly refer them to the assistance they need.

a. Stigma

The stigma surrounding receipt of mental health treatment remains a significant barrier that prevents servicemembers and their families from receiving such care. Testimony received by the Commission confirmed that many Massachusetts servicemembers experience the same concerns as their peers throughout the United States about seeking mental health treatment.

The American Psychiatric Association released a study earlier this year that demonstrates the role this stigma may have in preventing mental health treatment. The survey polled servicemembers and their families and found that 60 percent of respondents believed that seeking help for mental health concerns would negatively impact their career.²⁸ In addition, more than half of the respondents felt others would think less of them for seeking help for mental health concerns and most have never spoken a word to family or friends about mental health issues.²⁹ The same survey indicated that approximately 12 percent worried that their spouse would resent them for seeking mental health assistance to deal with the stresses of facing domestic issues alone.³⁰

This same stigma prevents Massachusetts servicemembers and their families from seeking assistance. The Commission heard both veterans and current police officers testify about the fear of losing a potential police, fire or civil service position because of mental health treatment. The testimony presented to the Commission indicated a need for increased educational and awareness efforts. It is vital to ensure that servicemembers, their families and the public at large are educated about the warning signs, treatment options and societal effects of mental health issues left untreated.

²⁸ American Psychiatric Association. News Release: Study finds Stigma May Still be a Barrier for Many Military members and Military Spouses Seeking Mental Health Care. April 30, 2008. <http://www.psych.org/MainMenu/Newsroom/NewsReleases/2008NewsReleases/SurveySaysStigmaRemainsaSignificantBarrierforMilitaryFamilieswithMentalHealthConcerns.aspx>.

²⁹ Id.

³⁰ Id.

The purpose of an educational effort is twofold. First, education about mental health will aid in reducing the stigma surrounding mental health issues and care. Second, it will raise awareness of a growing issue that needs to be addressed by not only the federal government but also by state governments and individual communities.

Education and training for those most likely to have contact with servicemembers suffering from PTSD is absolutely necessary to ensure both recognition of an adjustment disorder as well as an understanding of treatment options to properly refer for treatment. First responders, such as police officers, corrections officers, EMTs and fire fighters, should have these tools since they often come into contact with service members facing readjustment issues. Additional groups which could benefit from training include members of the trial court system such as probation officers, prosecutor and judges.

b. Current Awareness Effort

One of the first community-focused efforts to assist in the readjustment challenges of new veterans was held on February 2, 2005, by Norfolk District Attorney William R. Keating. Based on the experiences of Vietnam veterans, DA Keating was concerned that new veterans in need would “fall through the cracks” and the symptoms of readjustment needs, such as substance abuse, aggression and depression, would manifest in ways that would involve the public safety community.

First, DA Keating held a community forum consisting of a broad spectrum of “community responders” that included police, fire, faith-based and social service officials, along with representatives of the veterans’ community servicing Norfolk County. As a result of the forum, DA Keating’s office produced a 10-minute video that explains what PTSD is, how it is a “normal reaction to abnormal circumstances” and the need for community leaders, particularly the public safety community, to respond to this issue. The video was distributed to all first responder agencies in the county with the intent of educating first responders, instructing them to ask people if they are recent combat veterans and, if so, providing police and fire personnel with referral information for the veteran and his or her family.

In collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner of Probation and the Boston Vet Center, a training program was implemented for probation officers across the state. In addition, the instructional video was distributed to the Chief of Probation in every District and Superior Court in Massachusetts. The goal of this effort was to extend the knowledge of this issue into the judicial system.

In addition, recognizing that combat deployment impacts the family of military personnel, DA Keating utilized existing programs he had initiated to deal with youth-at-risk issues and collaborated with Massachusetts-based Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists (“SOFAR”) to educate key groups on this aspect of the issue. Specifically SOFAR addressed the

Norfolk School Partnership Coalition, made of school psychologists, guidance counselors and health professionals, and the Norfolk Juvenile Coalition, made of juvenile probation officials and court clinicians, regarding the trauma that children experience when a parent or sibling is deployed to a combat zone.

The efforts of DA Keating spurred similar programs across the country by local community groups, police departments, VA Offices and National Guard Units. Information on the program was provided to scores of agencies from more than 17 states and direct assistance was provided to develop community forums in Connecticut and Rhode Island. In addition, an Outreach Coordinator in the Vet Center in Hartford, Connecticut, was redeployed to Iraq as a Stress Counselor and used the video during his combat debriefing sessions for US troops.

Recommendation #2. Awareness and Knowledge of Readjustment Issues

The Commission recommends the following:

- **Commonwealth -Wide Implementation of the “Are You a Vet?” Program** – The Commission recommends the GACVS, in conjunction the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association, and veterans services and law enforcement providers, to develop protocol for public safety officials that address the needs of the community, the veteran in need and his or her family. They should look to build upon the efforts of District Attorneys Keating and Scheibel. These recommendations would be designed to prevent escalations and provides a general outline for public safety officials to follow based on a variety of factors and circumstances. This approach considers the wide range of issues and facts that are involved in every individual situation. A series of policy recommendations should be made to establish different parameters based on a variety of factors that will guide such professionals in performing their job. The goal is to protect public safety (and the safety of the veteran and their families) and provide an enlightened and sensible approach for the men and women who served their country. The GACVS could look to establish a statewide method of training to identify readjustment maladies impacting combat veterans and strategies to connect them with proper services. The Commission recommends further exploration of partnerships with *SOFAR* and *Give an Hour* and others to assist in training first responders without placing a greater strain on state financial resources.

Finding #3. Responsibility of Communities

Community organizations, non-profits and individual citizens desire to assist servicemembers and their families. Harnessing the tremendous resources available within individual communities could aid significantly in filling the current gaps in mental health and readjustment service provision.

District Attorney Keating presented a proposal outlining community based efforts to assist in the readjustment for recent combat veterans and their families. One major challenge DA Keating pointed out was to “connect the dots” between existing community resources and state and federal veterans programs to meet the needs of veterans and their families. DA Keating also emphasized the traditional role of “first responders”—police, fire and EMT personnel—who often encounter veterans in need, can be enhanced by developing the role of “community responders”—such as clergy, school counselors and social service professionals—in identifying veterans in need and connecting them to the appropriate resources.

Recommendation #3. Responsibility of Communities

The Commission recommends the following:

- **Mental Health Professionals** – The Commission strongly encourages the Governor to call upon members of the Massachusetts mental health provider community to volunteer their time and expertise to assist returning service members. The participation of the mental health community is a vital part of a community-based effort to provide servicemembers and their families with the support they need. The Commission further recommends that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Legislature and GACVS announce a formal partnership with the state and *Give an Hour* and *SOFAR* to coordinate the providers’ community volunteer efforts. Such a partnership would serve to also highlight these resources for service members and their families. The Commission applauds the work of both programs which provide confidential counseling services outside of the traditional military community. Both programs provide counseling to non-dependents of the servicemember, a service that DOD and VA do not automatically provide.
- **Religious Communities** – The Commission recommends that religious communities be included in the work of the GACVS. The Commission further recommends that religious groups are included in statewide outreach efforts. Numerous statewide groups with local affiliates, such as the Massachusetts Council of Churches and local Interfaith Councils, offer a wealth of resources which could further augment existing federal and state

resources. *Give an Hour* also provides an opportunity for clergy to volunteer their services.

- **Individual Citizens – Massachusetts Vet Volunteer Corp** – The Commission urges the Governor to support the Commission’s concept of a Massachusetts Vet Volunteer Corp (VetCorp). The VetCorps is a proposal under the Commission’s Operation CARE initiative. The Commission recommends the creation of a link on the Yellow Ribbon website to contain information about how a citizen can volunteer time for opportunities that assist veterans. In keeping with the “serving those who serve” community based model, the Commission recommends grouping volunteer opportunities by region. The Commission further recommends GACVS in conjunction with the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, the Military Division and the Department of Veterans’ Services examine how to implement this initiative and propose its official inclusion as part of the Governor’s Commonwealth Corps. Such an inclusion would provide citizens across the Commonwealth with an opportunity to lend their talents, unique ideas, and willingness to serve to address the needs of Massachusetts’ veterans.

Finding #4. Education and Outreach*a. Lack of Knowledge – Where do I seek help?*

In addition to the stigma associated with receipt of mental health assistance, a significant number of servicemembers and their families indicate having little to no knowledge about the warning signs or treatment options associated with the mental health issues that may result from deployment to a war zone.³¹ Time and again the Commission heard veterans describe feelings of helplessness as they faced readjustment difficulties without knowing where to turn for assistance.

A related problem results from servicemembers not thinking available services apply to them. Upon redeployment servicemembers receive numerous briefings regarding available readjustment resources. However, because PTSD and other readjustment issues may not materialize until months after return many servicemembers pay little attention to the presentations and briefings regarding available resources.

This Commission found that a lack of knowledge exists about the available resources which exist to assist servicemembers and their families with mental health issues. The lack of knowledge is a barrier that prevents servicemembers and family members from receiving mental health assistance. This lack of knowledge about existing resources and where to seek assistance is prevalent not only in the servicemember population but also among those in positions to assist servicemembers.

b. Unique Needs

The Commission has also found that the needs of servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are different from those of previous wars. Health care providers and veterans organizations are beginning to better understand these needs. The diversity among individuals needing assistance presents challenges to ensuring effective service provision.

To meet the unique needs of this new generation of servicemembers, service providers continue to work to identify what the best methods are for educating those who served and their families about benefits. For example, the National Guard offers welcome home/readjustment events to connect the veterans with a myriad of services at one time. Members and families are paid to attend and are able to pick and choose services they require.

³¹ American Psychiatric Association. News Release: Study Finds Stigma May Still be a Barrier for Many Military Members and Military Spouses Seeking Mental Health Care. April 30, 2008. <http://www.psych.org/MainMenu/Newsroom/NewsReleases/2008NewsReleases/SurveySaysStigmaRemainsaSignificantBarrierforMilitaryFamilieswithMentalHealthConcerns.aspx>.

Recommendation #4. Education and Outreach

The Commission recommends the following:

- **Resource Directories** – Enhance the existing resource directories to ensure they are up to date and accurately reflect services offered. The Secretary of the Commonwealth’s Office in conjunction with the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, the Department of Veterans’ Services, and the Military Division shall update the *Veterans’ Laws and Benefits Guide* on an annual basis. This resource guide shall include a dedicated section for a listing of resources where service members and their families can find mental health care.

The Commission also recommends the Yellow Ribbon Program develop an additional reintegration resource guide(s) which will be posted on the Yellow Ribbon web site. To ensure the guide is comprehensive, the Yellow Ribbon Staff shall work with DVS, the Military Division, the GACVS and the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs.

- **Public Service Announcements** – Develop and coordinate public service announcements (PSAs) in partnership with various media outlets to better educate the public on the symptoms, treatment options and effects of readjustment disorders on service members, their families, and local communities. The PSAs shall also be used to promote the local VSO program. The Commission recommends that prior to a PSAs release, consultation shall occur with the Governor’s Advisory Council on Veterans Services.

Finding #5. Geographical Barriers to Care

Today, 44 percent of new military recruits come from rural areas.³² Unfortunately, when these servicemembers from rural areas return home, they face barriers in reaching health care, particularly in accessing to specialized care services. Massachusetts has five VA medical centers (“VAMC”), 4 in the eastern part of the state (Bedford, Jamaica Plain, West Roxbury, Brockton) and 1 in western Massachusetts (Leeds). There are also 17 community based outpatient clinics (“CBOCs”) located around the Commonwealth that provide healthcare resources for veterans whose communities are not served by a VAMC. CBOCs have been VA’s solution to combating geographical barriers to care.

However, there are numerous services which are only provided at VAMC. Testimony given in a recent Congressional hearing on rural veterans also suggests that many veterans still prefer to seek care from private health care providers. This includes a significant number of veterans whose combat experience was with the National Guard.

For those veterans seeking transportation to a VAMC, the Commission has discovered veterans primarily rely on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Transportation Network and personal assistance from friends and family. The MBTA provides bus, subway, commuter rail and ferry service. However, it primarily serves the 175 communities east of Worcester, a population of almost 4.7 million people. The population of the Commonwealth is estimated to be 6.5 million.

The Commonwealth has found that the transportation services offered by the DAV vans are the primary and, in some cases, the sole transportation available for many veterans. Three years ago, when the fleet of vans in Massachusetts was aging, the Legislature appropriated \$100,000 for van maintenance. Currently, the DAV supports the Northampton, Brockton, Plymouth, Boston and Bedford areas. The Nathan Hale Foundation, a state funded non-profit veteran’s transportation program, serves veterans in the Plymouth area.

The population of Massachusetts veterans over the age of 55 will compose more than 71% of the veterans population for the next ten years. The VA has determined this population is most likely to seek care at a VAMC. The Commission heard from countless veterans of previous wars who only now have felt comfortable speaking about their struggles with PTSD. Others testified that the saturation of media coverage on the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan has made them recall

³² Tyson 2005

difficult memories from decades ago as if they happened yesterday. This population needs to be considered when assessing the impacts of the current war.

The following table was compiled from the VA's VetPop database and shows the trend of Massachusetts' veteran population over the age of 55 for the next 10 years.

Year*	Total MA Veteran Population	Veterans over age 55	% of Veteran Population
2008	424,765	305,565	71.9%
2009	409,184	294,036	71.9%
2010	393,722	282,717	71.8%
2011	378,622	272,218	71.9%
2012	364,052	262,360	72.1%
2013	350,021	252,392	72.1%
2014	336,653	243,027	72.2%
2015	323,900	234,059	72.3%
2016	311,759	225,563	72.4%
2017	300,231	217,287	72.4%
2018	289,276	209,525	72.4%

*as of September of each year

Studies show that geographical issues, for example in the case of Massachusetts veterans living west of Worcester and on the Cape and Islands, in combination with travel challenges presented by the New England winters, are a significant barrier to accessing care.

Recommendation #5. Geographical Barriers to Care

The Commission recommends the following:

- The Commission recommends full support of new VA mobile counseling centers. The VA states these vans will “improve access to counseling by bringing services closer to veterans. The 38-foot motor coaches, which have spaces for confidential counseling, will carry Vet Center counselors and outreach workers to events and activities to reach

veterans in broad geographic areas.” The Commission recommends the legislature issue a resolution urging Congress to expedite the placement of a mobile counseling van in Springfield and review if other areas in Massachusetts may benefit from such services.

Additionally, in light of the formation of the Yellow Ribbon Program and the Mobile VetCenter Program, the Commission recommends the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs in conjunction with DVS and GACVS review all state funded veterans programs to ensure that state services do not duplicate federal programs.

- **DAV Van Program Drivers** – The DAV Van program has proven to be an integral part of connecting veterans with services. While the program receives support from the VA, it frequently struggles to find enough drivers. Because drivers must meet certain criteria, including vision standards and never having a heart attack, this limits the pool of volunteers. The Commission recommends promoting volunteering as van drivers as part of Operation CARE’s “VetCorp” launch. This could increase services to the South Coast and regions between Worcester and Springfield which currently are underserved.

Finding #6. Lack of State Specific Veteran Related Data or Statistical Information

The lack of state specific veteran related statistical data prevents fully determining the types and amounts of resources that need to be made available to address the mental health needs of returning servicemembers. It is difficult to determine with accuracy the number of veterans in Massachusetts who have sought mental health assistance, received mental health treatment or attempted or have committed suicide because assistance comes from various resources which use dissimilar reporting methods, and they are barred from sharing information or fail to ask whether an individual is a veteran when providing services.

This barrier was outlined during testimony before the Commission by Coleman Nee, Undersecretary of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services, and Ellen Connorton of the *Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention*. Undersecretary Nee detailed the Commonwealth's participation in a recent Strategic Planning Conference and Policy Academy focused on returning veterans and their families. The academy was sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to craft improvements to veterans' care. The lack of veteran related data was highlighted in the application for participation, as well as discussed during the academy as a difficulty faced by other states.³³

Ellen Connorton of the *Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention* also discussed the lack of veteran specific data in her testimony before the Commission. The Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention does not have suicide data specifically related to the veteran population. As a result, it becomes difficult to statistically demonstrate a correlation with the supposed national trend of increased suicides among the veteran population. The lack of a systematic reporting system leads to inadequate data on mental health and suicide risks within the veteran community.

It is vital for policymakers to have accurate statistical data to develop sound public policy. This lack of information could hinder program development as well as jeopardize continued funding for programs of vital importance to servicemembers and their families. In addition, accurate statistical data would allow service providers to more effectively allocate resources and services.

³³ See Appendix 2. Application from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for Participation in the Returning Veterans and Their Families Strategic Planning Conference and Policy Academy. Outlining problem with data collection and sharing.

Recommendation #6. Lack of State Specific Veteran Related Data or Statistical Information

The Commission recommends the following:

- **Implement Policy Academy Initiatives** – The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the Governor’s Advisory Council on Veterans Services, and the Department of Veterans’ Services shall work to implement the Strategic Planning Conference and Policy Academy lessons learned. The *Application for Commonwealth Participation* provided by the Academy outlines a number of initiatives designed to foster improved data collection methods and the sharing of information across public and private groups dedicated to assisting veterans. Such improvements include ensuring all state agencies are aware of and have the capability to refer clients to veteran related benefits. The Commission recommends the GACVS share its findings with the Ways and Means and Veterans and Federal Affairs Committees.

Additional Findings and Recommendations

- **Military Children’s Interstate Compact** (Council of State Governments - “CSG”) – The Commission recommends that Massachusetts join other states that have introduced legislation establishing an interstate compact for military children. The Commission was charged to identify better ways to assist a servicemember’s support system, which includes his or her family. The Commission has identified the Council of State Governments Interstate Compact as a useful tool in supporting its charge. This compact addresses issues caused by reassignment of military personnel and highlights the inherent need for states to collaborate on this matter. According to an executive summary of the compact provided by CSG, *“Military families move between postings on a regular basis. While reassignments can often be a boon for career personnel, they often wreak havoc on the children of military families. Issues these children face include: losing and making new friends, adjusting to new cities and bases, and changing schools. While the armed services have taken great leaps to ease the transition of personnel, their spouses and most importantly children, much remains to be done at the state and local levels to ensure that the children of military families are afforded the same opportunities for educational success as other children and are not penalized or delayed in achieving their educational goals by inflexible administrative and bureaucratic practices.”*
- **Enhancement of “Mental Health Parity” Legislation** (Chapter 256 of the Acts of 2008) – In keeping with the sentiments expressed in the mental health parity bill passed by the Legislature earlier this year, the Commission recommends exploration in conjunction with the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to identify options that would allow veterans diagnosed with mental health disabilities to obtain a disabled veteran (DV) license plate. The Commission feels that such action would help to further reduce the stigma associated with seeking and receiving treatment for readjustment issues. In Massachusetts, veterans with a 60 percent or greater physical impairment may be eligible for the DV plate. The Massachusetts DV plate is directly linked to eligibility for handicapped parking and certain state tax abatements/exemptions. In other states, the plate serves as a public display of one’s service but does not require the veterans’ disability to be a physical disability. Conversely, in Massachusetts there are veterans who are recognized by the VA as 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans because of PTSD or other mental health issues, but do not qualify for the state’s DV plate.
- **State Military Family Medical Leave Policy** – The Commission recommends further exploration by the GACVS about the creation of a state military family medical leave

policy. This may be one avenue to provide family members who are primary caregivers for their servicemember an opportunity to assist their loved ones during times of need without the threat of losing their employment.

- **VSMIS System Installation** – In keeping with the Commission’s recommendation for continuity, DVS is encouraged to continue to work with cities and towns to complete the installation of the VSMIS system used to process Chapter 115 forms in all VSO offices within a reasonable time period. The Commission recognizes that a new web-based VSMIS system is currently being designed, which is intended to further streamline the Chapter 115 program. The Commission requests additional information about the program and the associated cost for all cities and towns to have access to the program expeditiously.
- **“The “So Far” Guide for Helping Children and Youth Cope with the Deployment of a Parent in the Military Reserves”** – The Commission recommends distribution of the “So Far” guide to all schools in the Commonwealth to continue knowledge sharing. The Commission supports collaboration between the Executive branch and the Legislative branch in this venture and encourages an opportunity for Legislators to participate in the distribution of literature in their own communities.

IX. Conclusion

This Commission has taken the first step “to care for him who shall have borne the battle.” Yet much work remains to be done.³⁴ The Commission report should serve as a tool for further discussion and action in the Commonwealth and provide an opportunity to reassess ways to connect with veterans and military families with much needed services.

In responding to the specific charges outlined in *Chapter 1 of the Resolves of 2008*, the Commission has reached the following conclusions:

1. The state has obligation to thoroughly examine its existing state programs for veterans and military families and identify ways to continue to adjust to the changing needs of all veterans.
2. Massachusetts has an opportunity to further cement its commitment to the veterans and military community by creating partnerships between government and private sector entities, such as collaboration with mental health providers, as well as enhancing intergovernmental communications, such as creating a landmark first responder training to address the unique needs of veterans.
3. Further study is needed to properly create a state military family support model. Supporting the family of those who serve – before, during and after their service – is a critical part of caring for servicemembers and must not be considered as tangential.
4. Additional study is needed to explore how Massachusetts can utilize its numerous medical centers to assist in addressing traumatic brain injury, the signature injury of the Iraq/Afghanistan war.

The Co-Chairmen commend the work of the Commission members and are proud to have a single document supported by the Commission. Their committed work will ensure that Massachusetts remains at the forefront of providing servicemembers, veterans and their families with the care and support they deserve.

³⁴ President Abraham Lincoln. Second Inaugural Address. March 4, 1865.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Strategic Plan to Increase Employment Opportunities for Veterans

Report of the Interagency Taskforce on Veterans Employment

March 8, 2013

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Introduction

The Commonwealth has a proud history, and leads the nation in providing benefits and services to our returning Veterans. Of the Commonwealth's Executive Branch workforce, approximately 5.4% are self-identified Veterans. Vietnam Era Veterans represent 1.3% of the overall population.

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However, as a result of the U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan winding down, there is a rising number of Veterans entering the job market. The unemployment rate for younger veterans, ages 18-24, exceeds the national unemployment rate, currently 7.7% according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows a general trend in the unemployment rate for veterans exceeding the unemployment rate for non-veterans. For our younger veterans, ages 18-24 this trend is even greater. The high percentage of unemployment amongst younger Veterans is due partly to stereotyping Veterans' fitness for employment, such as inadequate technology skills and lack of education. Additionally, a number of older veterans have acquired new skills and are transitioning from college into second careers. While employers value military service, most will admit that they experienced some challenges in translating military experience and skills to civilian jobs.

Research has shown that many of our returning Veterans are well skilled, and have matriculated in four year institutions of higher learning or have attended community colleges. This classroom experience coupled with the hands on leadership experience they gained as a result of being in the military and operating in real world situations make these individuals well equipped to enter the job market. They are trained to lead by example and to respect process and procedures, while also demonstrating ingenuity and resourcefulness in problem solving. They can enhance our workplace with greater diversity and global perspective on our efforts.

The first challenge faced by the Commonwealth is equipping our hiring managers with the tools they need to properly assess and translate military experience into civilian terms. Second, our workforce must be prepared to create a welcoming environment for our Veterans to return to and be productive contributors. Addressing the employment concerns of returning Veterans is of the utmost importance to the Patrick-Murray Administration.

The Administration launched an aggressive and far reaching Veteran's employment initiative that is aimed at providing assistance and mechanisms for getting more veterans to work in Massachusetts.

Background

The Governor and Lieutenant Governor called for the establishment of an Interagency Taskforce on Hiring Veterans. The taskforce will balance our non-discrimination, equal opportunity and diversity efforts pursuant to Executive Order 526 and our current efforts to be a Model Employer of Persons with Disabilities. The Secretary of Administration and Finance and the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Services were charged with this responsibility. As a result, the Interagency Veterans Taskforce on Employment was launched in March 2012. Secretary Gonzalez charged the head of the Human Resources Division along with Taskforce members to take a critical look at the Executive Branch's current policies, processes and practices on hiring Veterans and to think creatively and boldly in offering recommendations around three critical goals:

- I. Identifying and removing barriers to employment for Veterans in an effort to increase employment within each Secretariat;
- II. Increasing the level of awareness of hiring managers about the value and benefits of hiring Veterans; and
- III. Designing a tracking system to track the Commonwealth's progress from year to year on employment initiatives resulting from this taskforce.

The recommendations outlined in this strategic plan reflect the thinking of the Taskforce members about these critical goals and how the Executive Branch can move forward implementing them. Our

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strategic approach is centered on five comprehensive areas:

1. Leadership Commitment
2. Compatible and Complimentary Efforts
3. Skills Development and Employment
4. Marketing Veterans' Employment
5. Establishing an Information Gateway

Leadership Commitment – establishes a governance structure and infrastructure dedicated solely to the employment of Veterans in the Executive Branch;

Compatible and Complimentary Efforts – forces a focus on existing diversity and inclusion efforts as outlined pursuant to Executive Order 526 such that these Veterans' efforts are compatible to and complimentary of existing efforts;

Skills Development and Employment – focuses on providing employment counseling and aligning the talents and aspirations of Veterans with civil service career and management opportunities;

Marketing Veterans' Employment – creates a marketing campaign targeted to Veterans on the benefits of continuing their careers in public service within the Executive Branch, and to hiring officials on how Veterans can meet skills demands in their organizations and;

Information Gateway – creates a single-source website for disseminating accurate and consistent Veteran employment information and resources for Veterans, human resources (HR) professionals, and hiring officials.

An initiative of this magnitude is a great challenge. It requires a strategic approach and a shared vision. But, most important, it requires leadership support and agency participation to make it happen.

Our Vision

The Executive Branch will become a Model Employer of Veterans

The Vision Statement embodies our key guiding principles:

- We have top leadership support and accountability for the recruitment, employment, development and retention of Veterans in the Executive Branch;
- We are committed to Veterans by administering Veterans' Preference programs fully and accurately;
- We work to mitigate barriers to employment for Veterans';
- We value Veterans for their commitment to public service, skills, and dedication;

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- We will align efforts to employ Veterans with a disability to our Model Employer of Persons with Disability efforts; and

We identify and promote excellence throughout Government in the recruitment, on-boarding, development, and retention of Veterans.

Mission:

- Eliminate policy and process barriers that impede Veterans from effectively competing for employment opportunities in the Executive Branch.
- Increase the employment of Veterans in the Executive Branch.

Strategic Goals

The strategies in this plan are designed to help agencies take a comprehensive and collaborative approach to Veterans' employment in the Executive Branch. By leveraging capacity and resources of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Veterans Services and the Human Resources Division, each Executive Branch agency will be better positioned to increase the number of Veterans coming into its workforce and to utilize their talents to achieve its mission.

I. Identify and remove barriers to employment for Veterans in an effort to increase the number of Veterans employed in the Executive Branch.

We identified five key barriers to increasing the number of Veterans employed in the Executive Branch:

- Lack of clear directives regarding the value and importance of hiring Veterans;
- Existing infrastructure does not support advocacy of Veterans' employment within Executive Branch agencies;
- Insufficient professional development opportunities to further understand Veterans' preference and utilization of special hiring authorities by HR professionals and hiring officials;
- Inadequate understanding of Veterans' preference and the Executive Branch hiring process by our Veterans and transitioning service members and;
- Absence of a concrete system to match Veterans' skills and education to positions

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within the Executive Branch.

A. Ensure agency leaders understand and advocate the value and importance of hiring Veterans in the Executive Branch.

Our agency leaders will advocate for the employment of Veterans, understanding the sacrifices our Veterans have made in protecting our country. To achieve this goal, the following action steps will be completed:

1. Create a governance structure within the Executive Branch to provide leadership and accountability for Veterans' employment by:
 - i. Establishing an Interagency Task Force on Veteran Employment;
 - ii. Directing that the Interagency Taskforce on Veteran Employment bring forward policy and process recommendations to improve our ability to identify Veterans who can contribute meaningfully to attainment of agency missions and objectives;
 - iii. Implement Interagency Taskforce recommendations as expeditiously as possible to (a) eliminate systematic barriers that confront Veterans, and (b) improve Veterans' hiring outcomes;
 - iv. Developing and implementing Government-wide Veterans' Recruitment and Employment Strategic Plan; and
 - v. Providing an annual report to the Secretary for Administration and Finance, the Secretary of Veteran Services' and the Chief Human Resources Officer on the progress of the Veterans' employment effort.

B. Ensure our Veterans' efforts are compatible to and complimentary of existing diversity and inclusion efforts.

We are presently committed to recruiting, hiring and retaining an Executive Branch workforce that reflects the diversity of the Commonwealth. These efforts proceed under Executive Order 526. As we launch an effort to achieve our objectives relative to Veterans, we should build on our existing diversity efforts.

1. Utilize the Executive Order 526 Guidelines and the Commonwealth as a Model Employer of Persons with Disabilities effort to develop and/or refine administrative efforts to achieve our Veterans' efforts mission objectives.

C. Align Veterans' and transitioning service members' skills and career aspirations to Executive Branch opportunities.

The Executive Branch has a very diverse workforce; one that reflects the diversity of the Commonwealth. The range of employment opportunities within the Executive Branch is broad. A key element of our work is to align Veterans with these employment opportunities. Through skills developed during service and from additional training and education received through other means, Veterans are excellent candidates to fill positions in Executive Branch agencies.

D. Ensure Executive Branch agencies view Veterans' skills and dedication as essential in meeting mission objectives.

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Military Veterans have developed key leadership and technological skills and have developed a strong sense of public service. It is critical we aggressively market the Executive Branch as a place Veterans can continue serving while realizing their career aspirations. At the same time, we will ensure hiring officials are keenly aware of Veterans' skills and attributes and view them as essential in meeting agency missions and objectives. Action steps include:

1. Promote Veterans and their employment in an Executive Branch-wide marketing campaign.

E. Ensure Veterans and hiring managers receive accurate and consistent information regarding Veterans' employment.

State law provides a boost to Veterans' efforts to obtain employment. [Pursuant to Civil Service Laws, veterans are entitled to a veteran's preference on eligibility lists for official service positions in which a civil service exam is administered and a passing score is achieved. Veterans may be afforded preference on the list for labor service positions. In addition, veterans may receive a hiring preference for provisional appointments where the veteran is deemed to be qualified for the position. See: MGL c. 31 § 26 and PAR 14.2.]. Additionally, we have an interest in accurately reflecting the presence of Veterans within our workforce. We must ensure that Human Resource Personnel and Hiring Managers are aware of state law, administration policies and administrative guidance relative to both. To do so, we will:

1. Ensure HR Professionals and Hiring Managers are well-versed on Veterans' preference programs and other administrative policy and guidance relative to Veterans.

II. Increase the level of awareness of hiring managers about the value and benefits of hiring Veterans.

In the effort to recruit more Veterans, we have researched the best practices in the public and private sectors and determined the best strategies for our success. Managers are a key component to our success and as such we must ensure they have a heightened awareness of the value Veterans bring to the workplace. By equipping our managers with the appropriate tools, we facilitate their ability to bring the best talent into our workforce.

A. Develop Best Practices and provide an approach for the Outreach and Recruitment of Veterans.

Action steps include:

1. Survey One Stop Career Center Veteran Services Representatives, Disabled Veteran Representatives and Community Colleges and College Career Placement Offices
 - i. Analyze data to determine best approach to reaching Veterans currently seeking employment in civilian jobs
2. Utilize State Employees testimonials as recruitment tool
 - i. Solicit support from the current state employee-Veteran community

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(management/non-management) to share their employment experiences via a video, which will highlight the challenges of transitioning to civilian workforce as well as tips for transitioning; in an effort to build bridges of support.

B. Host a statewide Career Fair for Veterans through collaboration across Executive Branch agencies, Higher Education, Quasi-Public Agencies, Trial Courts, Massachusetts National Guard and other interested parties.

1. Establish link from the Commonwealth Employment Opportunities (CEO) website to MassVetAdvisor.org. MassVetsAdvisor.org is a tool to assist veterans and their families with finding benefits and services. It is vital that the Commonwealth be included as a prominent opportunity for employment. Therefore, MassVetAdvisor.org includes the link to the CEO website under employment opportunities. In addition, we should identify and create relationships with community colleges, colleges and universities to increase avenues for recruitment of Veterans and;
2. Create Veteran Liaisons in each agency by aligning the work of Agency Diversity Officers such that they inherit responsibility for promoting Veterans' recruitment, employment, and retention of Veterans in their agencies.

C. Develop tools that will assist HR Professionals and Hiring Managers during the hiring process.

Action steps include the development of the following materials for HR professionals and hiring managers:

1. Develop a Military Primer (general information about Military)
2. Develop a Military Glossary (common Military terminology)
3. Develop a Crosswalk (translation of Military jobs to civilian jobs)
4. Standardize Lead Sheet for hiring process
 - i. Design a job aid for HR/CMS Knowledge Center
 - ii. Update New Hires Check list (managers handbook)

D. Develop training for HR Professionals and Hiring Managers to enhance skills in on-boarding Veterans.

Action steps include:

1. Modify "Battlemind" or other military cultural awareness training into Seminar for HR Professionals and Hiring Managers. "Battle-mind" training illustrates some of the challenges veterans may face when returning from combat deployments.
2. Enhance Commonwealth Management Certificate Program and Commonwealth Supervisors Certificate Program's HR Day, Diversity Training Part I for managers to include a focus on Veterans via the video testimonials.
3. Incorporate into the Manager's Mental Health training curriculum a component on Veterans with a focus on Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injuries.

E. Launch a Self-identification Marketing Campaign

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Action steps include:

1. Design self-identification form for Veterans.
2. Prepare a set of Frequently Asked Questions.
3. Secure consultants to design an Executive Branch wide self-identification marketing campaign.

III. Establish baseline data and develop a tracking system to measure the Commonwealth's progress from year to year on the employment of Veterans.

Key to the success of any initiative is the ability to track and measure progress. It is vitally important that we establish indicators for success, but we must also ensure that everyone is starting from the same reference point. To this end, we will:

- A.** Establish a common definition of Veteran.
- B.** Gather and validate the current population of Veterans in Executive Branch in order to establish baseline data.
- C.** Work with ITD and HR/CMS team to condense and expand military dropdown selections in HR/CMS to better reflect Veterans in our workforce.
- D.** Collaborate with ITD to refine methods of collecting and extracting data from HR/CMS to ensure our ability to successfully track and measure progress.
- E.** Incorporate Veterans goals in our Diversity Plans.

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Interagency Task Force Members:

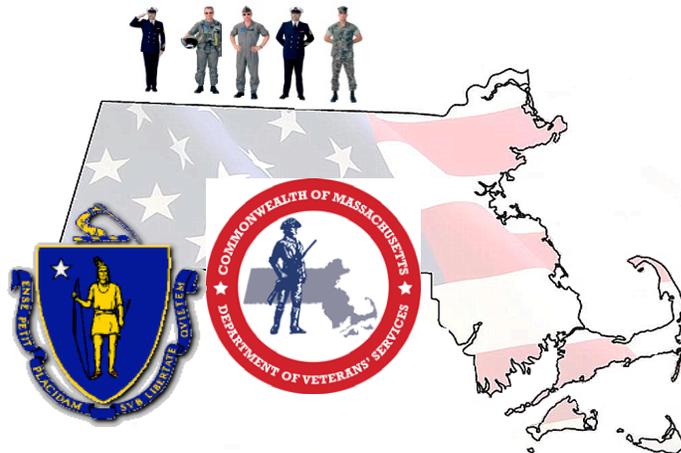
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Supporting our Servicemen and Women, Veterans, and Military Families: The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services



Veterans' Services Accomplishments

Massachusetts has a proud record as the national leader in veterans' services. Even during times of economic uncertainty it should be remembered by all of us that veterans of the Commonwealth and nation have sacrificed and served their country and deserve the fine opportunities and benefits they have dutifully earned. The Patrick-Murray Administration values veterans from all eras and their families who serve alongside them, and has made supporting veterans a priority in the Governor's fiscal year 2014 budget and previous budgets.

Executive Branch Leadership - The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services was re-established by Executive Order in April of 2007. After laying dormant for the previous 12 years before they came into office, Governor Patrick and Lt. Governor Murray chose to reconvene the council in order to give veterans, their family members, and their advocates a seat at the table in the Governor's Office and Executive Branch. The Council works to review and assess state, federal, and local statutes and programs relating to veterans and their families and the delivery of services to them, including healthcare, education, housing, outreach, training and retraining. Lt. Governor Murray has served as chairman, and worked across party lines with partners in the Federal Delegation, State Legislature, and Municipal Leaders to support those who have served. Specifically, he partnered with members of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs and the members who have deployed: Senator Michael Rush, Representative Hank Naughton, Representative Jerry Parisella, and Former Representative James Vallee. Working together, two pieces of comprehensive legislation to support veterans and military families were passed in 2009 and 2012 and signed into law by Governor Patrick.

Since 2009, Lt. Governor Murray has led an annual Veterans Tour to highlight and promote services and benefits available to veterans and military families. Over the course of a two week period each year, the Lt. Governor participated in numerous tours, meetings, and events supporting and relating to military and veterans' issues. The goals of the tour were to reach those who have not yet taken advantage of these services; increase public awareness that we are a nation still involved in warzones; and to express thanks to those who have served in the

military, honor them for their service, and acknowledge their commitment to defending the country.

Lt. Governor Murray also chairs the Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force which consults with the Department of Veterans' Services and the Massachusetts National Guard to ensure the thousands of military personnel and their families who live and/or work on our Commonwealth's six military bases are getting the support they need.

Supporting our Veterans by Prioritizing Funding - The Department of Veterans' Services and Soldiers' Homes in Chelsea and Holyoke have been free from reductions over the past four fiscal years. The Governor's 2014 budget continues to fund, or increase, service levels for veteran service programs totaling \$132.8 million, supporting an increase of approximately 7% over FY13 estimated spending. Over the last six years of the Patrick-Murray Administration, collective funding for the Department of Veterans' Services and Soldiers' Homes has increased 47% or \$42.5 million in order to continue providing care and services for the rising number of veterans and their families in Massachusetts.

Signature Initiatives

Creating Educational Opportunities and Supports for Student Veterans and Military Children

- Lt. Governor Murray established the Military Child Educational Awareness Program, which is an expansion of the Massachusetts National Guard's successful pilot program for military children in the Massachusetts school system. Also, as part of The VALOR Act, Massachusetts joined more than 40 other states as part of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, improving the transition between schools for the children of military families. The Student Veterans Advisory Board was created and recently held the 1st Annual Student Veterans Appreciation Day. Further, as a result of a directive from Lt. Governor Murray to increase training for veterans' representatives in all higher education institutions and promote the GI Bill, 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.

Getting our Veterans Back to Work - In 2011, the Patrick-Murray Administration launched an aggressive employment campaign focused on increasing the hiring of Massachusetts veterans. Among these initiatives, the Administration has partnered with major trade associations to encourage them to hire veterans and circulate information on veterans' benefits. 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 state. These grants provided training and placement assistance by which over 960 veterans were placed in long-term position with competitive wages. Also, 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. Further, to lead by example within state government, Governor Patrick and Lt. Governor Murray established the Interagency Taskforce

on Hiring Veterans, which released a plan to improve hiring policies, practices, and processes. And in March 2013 in response to a request from First Lady Michelle Obama, Lt. Governor Murray established guidelines to assist members of the armed forces, veterans, and their spouses with professional licenses so they can more easily prepare for, transfer from other states to, and apply for jobs in the Commonwealth.

Creating Opportunities for Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses - Following authorization in 2012 of The VALOR Act, Governor Patrick signed an executive order to help small businesses owned by disabled veterans gain access to contracts for public projects in the areas of construction, design and goods and services procurement.

Giving Veterans Access to Information and the Recognition They Earned - Lt. Governor Murray worked with the Department of Veterans' Services and the Registry of Motor Vehicles to allow veterans the option to receive a Veterans Designation on the front of all MA Driver's Licenses and State IDs so first responders are aware of their veteran status and veterans can be notified of benefits. Since January 2012, more than 11,000 veterans have received new licenses and IDs. Also, the Department of Veterans' Services, along with the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, created the first in the nation veteran web portal www.MassVetsAdvisor.org which is a comprehensive easily searchable website outlining 400+ benefits and programs.

Supporting our Veterans and Military Families in Need - 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. The VA has provided \$325,000 per year for two years to provide community based outreach treatment to veterans in the Metro Boston area. Additionally, through a partnership with the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness, Lt. Governor Murray released the *Massachusetts Integrated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Among Veterans* that will ensure all Massachusetts veterans will have a stable place to call home. Lastly, the *MassHousing Home for the Brave Program* launched in July 2008 and was a program recommended by the Veteran's Council's Subcommittee on Housing. The program 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.

Women's Veterans Network and Military Sexual Trauma Working Group - The Women's Veterans Network (WVN) continues to expand in scope and programming under the direction of Lt. Governor Murray and DVS. This year the WVN will hold its 5th Annual Conference at UMass Boston on June 15. In addition to the conference, the WVN holds a Women Veterans Appreciation Day and numerous programming and outreach events each year. The WVN also provided direct peer support and referrals to over 300 women veterans this past year. 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.

The Patrick Administration's Vision for Action Steps in 2013–2014

- Coordinate across state agencies to ensure the needs of veterans and military families are given the attention they deserve. Increase awareness among the Legislature and the general public of the challenges facing veterans, service members and their families so programming and funding remains at current or expanded levels. We must never lose sight of why we serve those who have fought for us.
- Expand employment initiatives to all regions through the regional chambers of commerce, workforce investment boards, and local and statewide business associations.
- Support Gold Star Families by partnering with them and their organizations, and advocating for their needs and requests.
- Ensure the work done by the Massachusetts Veteran and War Memorial Commission is reviewed and that their recommendations are strongly considered by the Governor and Legislature for implementation to ensure that we support the sites across the Commonwealth and never forget those lost.
- With the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness and the Department of Veterans' Services implement *The Massachusetts Integrated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Among Veterans* and end veterans homelessness by 2015.
- Expand the Department of Veterans' Services SAVE and SHARP peer support outreach teams. These programs are national models which truly save the lives of veterans.
- With collaboration from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services the Department of Veterans' Services and the Holyoke and Chelsea Soldiers' Homes, draft a strategic statewide plan for the long term care needs of veterans to ensure the finest care.
- Partner with the Legislature, the Massachusetts Veterans Service Officers Association and the Massachusetts Municipal Association to ensure we have the most qualified and professional municipal veterans' agents by standardizing training and confirming compliance with Chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws.
- Under the guidance of the Department of Veterans' Services and the Department of Higher Education, promote the GI Bill and build on the momentum of the Student Veteran Advisory Board with the goal to expand the reach to every public and private institution in the Commonwealth so our institutions of higher learning become the national model for serving and educating our student veterans.
- Build on the VALOR Act and DHE and DVS's report to Promote Veterans' Access to and Success in Higher Education by releasing guidelines to streamline the acceptance of military experience for college credit at all state colleges and universities so the skills of our servicemen and women can more easily transition to the workforce.
- Re-launch the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans' Services with new members and Secretary of Veterans' Services Coleman Nee as the chair to be the mechanism that coordinates across all partners and agencies to implement these actions.
- Celebrate our success and always honor those who have served!

The Massachusetts Integrated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Among Veterans

*Ensuring all Massachusetts veterans have a stable place to call home
2013-2015*

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Gregory Bialecki, Secretary, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

John Polanowicz, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services

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Liz Rogers, Executive Director, Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness



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Executive Summary

The Massachusetts Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness among Veterans has a compelling vision: all Massachusetts veterans will have a stable place to call home. Its overall goal is bold: reduce the number of homeless veterans in the Commonwealth by 1,000 point in time by the end of 2015. Massachusetts veterans deserve nothing less.

According to the 2011 Point In Time count there were 1,268 homeless veterans on a given night across Massachusetts, which represents 7.6% of the total homeless population in the state. This Point In Time count has been trending downward in recent years, with the 2011 count 20.6% lower than that of the previous year. We also estimate that 450 of those individuals meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of chronically homeless.

The Steering Committee to End Veterans' Homelessness sought significant input into the development of the guiding principles, goals, targets, and strategies contained herein. Plans from the Veterans' Administration, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, Arizona, New Hampshire, King County, Washington and Washington State were reviewed and the Steering Committee spoke to the authors and implementing bodies to learn from their experiences. Additionally, the Steering Committee engaged well over 200 stakeholders from across the Commonwealth to identify barriers, opportunities, and best practices. Finally, the Steering Committee reviewed emerging best practices in preventing and ending homelessness among veterans from here in Massachusetts, as well as other parts of the country.

Stemming from this environmental scan and needs assessment, the Steering Committee identified five guiding principles that form the basis of this plan, and should be considered by stakeholders for all future implementation strategies.

1. Focus on results and evidence-based practices
2. Prioritize prevention and rapid rehousing
 - Divert and use shallower resources for non-chronically homeless veterans
3. Prioritize chronically homeless veterans, the most at-risk, and frequent utilizers of emergency care
 - Focus deep subsidy resources and services on chronically homeless veterans
4. Address the needs of all men and women who served in the military regardless of the type of discharge they received
5. Build partnerships

Further, in an effort to integrate federal, state, and local resources and to align with the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs' (VA) Plan to End Homelessness Among Veterans and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' (USICH) plan *Opening Doors*, the Steering Committee has organized its goals within a Four Pillar framework of (1)

Housing, (2) Prevention, (3) Intervention, and (4) Partnerships. The specific goals addressed by this plan include:

Goal 1: Veterans who become homeless are rehoused and stabilized

Goal 2: Veterans most at risk of homelessness remain housed.

Goal 3: Veterans have increased access to benefits and resources

Goal 4: Federal, state, and community resources are aligned and integrated to support veterans.

The following are signature initiatives of the Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness among Veterans, details of which are provided in the following pages.

1. Reduce the 2011 homeless veterans PIT count by 1,000 by the end of 2015.
2. End chronic homelessness among veterans, going from 450 to 0, by the end of 2015..
3. Access 1,000 units of permanent housing to meet plan goals by end of 2015, including:
 - 700 new HUD VASH vouchers
 - 250 new units of housing through DHCD initiatives for chronically homeless veterans, including at least 25 for non-VA eligible chronically homeless veterans
 - 50 housing subsidies through DHCD initiatives to access existing housing units for non-VA eligible homeless veterans
4. Support the VA's efforts to build community capacity to serve veterans where they live by contracting for HUD VASH case management, peer support and other services with DVS and community-based non-profits.
5. Expand partnerships between VA, MA ICHH, DVS (Chapter 115), DHCD, Continua of Care (CoC), VSO's, Housing Authorities, Regional Homeless Networks, and the Regional Housing Network. This partnership is the key to:
 - Accessing existing housing
 - New housing production
 - Providing comprehensive wrap around services
 - Ensuring access to benefits and income supports
 - Prevention
6. Develop regional lists of homeless veterans in partnership with CoCs, Regional Networks to End Homelessness, and city and town Veteran's Services Officers (VSO's) in order to prioritize resources and support services, to track progress and outcomes for specific individuals, and to understand the scope of veterans who are newly homeless and accessing systems of care.

7. Launch a demonstration project in Year 1 of this plan to test the feasibility of conversion strategies that allow providers to utilize existing veteran's emergency and transitional housing resources for permanent housing and community-based supports.
8. Improve research and data to better inform policy and target resources.

Background/Introduction

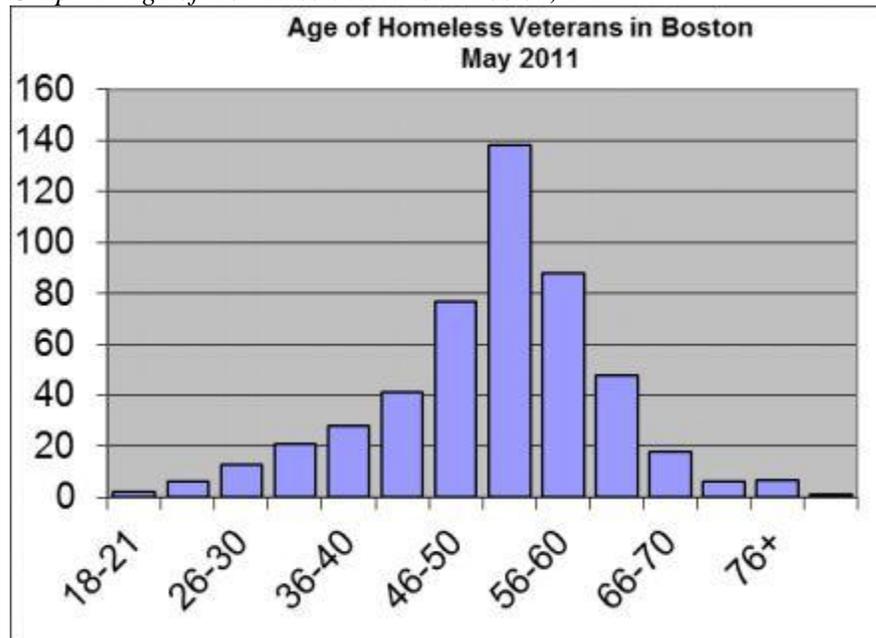
In December 2011, the Patrick Administration charged the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH) and the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) with drafting the first statewide plan to prevent and end homelessness among veterans. This action built upon several significant activities in recent years that had fostered emerging partnerships, setting the stage for a new way of approaching the challenge of ending veterans' homelessness in a targeted and collaborative fashion.

First, the VA released its 5-year plan to end homelessness in 2009, which challenged us to identify priorities and contribute to the national effort. Shortly thereafter the USICH released *Opening Doors*, which provided detailed models of strategic partnerships between the VA and other federal agencies. In January of 2011, the newly appointed Secretary of DVS announced that ending homelessness among veterans would be a top priority for his agency. Later that year, the VA and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) hosted a conference on ending veterans' homelessness, which brought together a diverse group of stakeholders from every region of the Commonwealth.

The Steering Committee initially reviewed several key data sources to obtain a baseline understanding of the economic and demographic characteristics of the population of veterans who are homeless or at-risk. Using data sources from HUD, VA, DVS, City of Boston, and the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA), the Steering Committee agreed that the Point In Time Count represented the best current estimate of the scale of homelessness among veterans. This data is imperfect and the plan will outline a process for improving data across systems. However, the plan relies on the PIT count for the purpose of setting targets and measuring progress over time. The other sources are utilized to provide additional context.

In sum, the 2011 Point In Time Count found 1,268 homeless veterans, which was down from 1,597 in 2010 and 1,890 in 2009. Thus, 7.6% of the homeless population is comprised of veterans, which is a lower percentage than the national rate of 14%. Home and Healthy for Good data from MHSA found that the average age of a homeless veteran served in their program was 51, which is similar to what the City of Boston found. Graph 1 below shows the age distribution for homeless veterans in the City of Boston's Continuum of Care.

Graph 1: Age of Homeless Veterans in Boston, 2011



The population is overwhelmingly male, with female veterans representing 3% of the population located in Boston, and less than 1% of those served by Home and Healthy for Good. National statistics support this estimation with females representing approximately 4% of all homeless veterans across the country. However, female veterans are at particular risk of homelessness, and are twice as likely as female non-veterans to become homeless. That risk increases among those who are poor. Female veterans in poverty are more than three times as likely to become homeless than female non-veterans in poverty. Being in a family household lowers the risk of homelessness for female veterans, with their risk factor equal to that of the non-veteran female population.

The City of Boston also found that 35% of homeless veterans were classified as chronically homeless under HUD's definition. We also estimate that a high percentage of homeless veterans in Massachusetts have disabilities. Indications are that physical, mental illness, substance abuse, and chronic health conditions are the most common. Boston found that 82% of homeless veterans reported having a disabling condition of some kind. National statistics support this finding, with homeless veterans being more likely to have a disability than homeless adults who are not veterans.

We are learning more about the risks veterans are facing to their housing stability as more are returning home from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) /Operation New Dawn, many of whom are quite young. Since 2001, DVS has record of 45,192 service members separating from service to Massachusetts. Nationally, we know that veterans between the ages of 18-30 are overrepresented in the homeless population. We do not yet have clarity on the average time it takes from returning home from service to when a veteran becomes homeless. We must monitor this closely over the course of the plan's implementation to determine whether we are meeting the needs of those younger veterans who served in OEF/OIF.

After review of the available data describing those veterans who are homeless, the Steering Committee determined that this plan should be as inclusive as possible. This plan is designed to address anyone who served in the military regardless of the type of discharge they received. Also, data indicated a need to target the significant subpopulation of chronically homeless veterans. In addition, women are an increasing segment of the homeless veteran population, and their unique needs suggest particular attention. Further, veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn could potentially be at risk, and thoughtful responses must be enacted in order to prevent them from becoming homeless or rehouse them as quickly as possible.

The timing of this plan is critical in order to leverage federal resources associated with the VA and USICH plans, and to capitalize on lessons coming from other states' efforts. As the data indicates, the number of homeless veterans in Massachusetts is on the decline, but significant challenges to meeting the goal remain. The public and political will exists in the Commonwealth now, so stakeholders must take action to ensure all Massachusetts veterans have a stable place to call home.

Goals, Strategies and Resources

Goal 1: Housing. Veterans who become homeless are re-housed and stabilized.

The solution to veteran's homelessness starts in the same place that all cost effective efforts to end homelessness begin – supporting current at-risk veteran tenancies and rapidly rehousing those that have become homeless. For homeless veterans who need long term assistance, we must marshal permanent supportive housing resources, moving the estimated 450 chronically homeless veterans off the street.¹ To do this we need to triage and provide either 1) rental assistance with supportive services or 2) fund the production of new or rehabilitated housing units linked with supportive services.

Producing new housing units is a very expensive response and must be reserved for individuals with the most serious and long term housing needs. We recommend building upon the current system of triage, so that Veterans Services Officers (VSOs), the VA, homeless service providers, shelter programs, and others can make good, reliable and time sensitive decisions about which veterans need an intervention strategy anchored in a unit versus those that can be accommodated with a mobile Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) voucher or other supportive housing resource.

Prior requests for VASH have been very successful for the Commonwealth – over 345 vouchers were secured in the FY 2012 round. However, the ability to use these VASH vouchers through a project-based approach² supporting appropriate developments is contingent on special approval. For the effort to be successful, DHCD and the network of homeless veterans housing providers need to obtain approximately 700 vouchers or 350 vouchers per year in VASH rounds. This will require coordination with service providers, current VASH recipients and others. Non-VASH vouchers are also needed for veterans who have less than honorable discharges and are thus ineligible for VASH. They often have significant challenges and need to be housed and stabilized quickly.

To respond to the most vulnerable veterans' long term needs, we recommend developing 250 new permanent supportive housing (PSH) units for chronically homeless veterans over the next three years. Many chronically homeless veterans will need subsidized units for a long period to stay housed. These PSH units, when coupled with appropriate services can provide a permanent resource and opportunity for a chronically homeless veteran to maintain housing

¹ “Permanent supportive housing” means decent, safe, and affordable community-based housing that provides tenants with the rights of tenancy under State and local landlord tenant laws and is linked to voluntary and flexible support and services designed to meet tenants’ needs and preferences. This definition was put forward by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) and is commonly accepted. This definition was adopted for Massachusetts’ Community Housing and Services Memorandum of Understanding.

² A Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher entitles the holder to make a rent payment that is adjusted to reflect no more than approximately 30% of their household income, subject to verification and annual re-certification. This voucher is mobile and can be used to pay rent for any eligible rental unit. The "project-basing" approach means that a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher is attached to a specific unit of housing, providing the rental assistance to the occupant of a specific housing unit. This process is frequently deployed with non-VASH vouchers to create permanent affordability and enhance the strength of a project's financing.

stability over the long-term.

To do this, we recommend that DHCD further prioritize housing for homeless veterans in two ways. The first approach is through the current homeless housing priority. Homeless projects can currently be proposed regardless of whether there is a DHCD rental round underway. To encourage proposals targeted to homeless veterans, DHCD can prioritize and highlight this preference within the out-of round homeless guideline in the 2013 Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). The second approach would be to include a specific veteran-focused incentive in the extremely low income (ELI) category for the updated pre-approval process categories in the 2013 QAP. Even with a focus on cost discipline in selecting projects, the costs of developing these units will be high. Developers proposing to DHCD will need the full suite of resources including tax credits, bond funded resources and rental assistance vouchers from DHCD to fund the development of hard units for veterans. To fight these high costs, DHCD will need both cost discipline from development interests (for example, selecting smart, lower cost adaptive re-use or preservation projects) and additional non-DHCD rental assistance resources.

To support these costs for the projects that truly need the deepest level of support, we recommend that up to 100 VASH and 25 non-VASH rental assistance vouchers be dedicated to the development of these 250 hard units. Non-VASH vouchers may be needed to house chronically homeless veterans who have less than an honorable discharge and thus ineligible for assistance through the VA. With the priority in the out-of-round and in rental round selection process, cost discipline among the developers, and some rental assistance resources, we believe that development interests can answer the call and provide up to 250 units of housing dedicated to chronically homeless veterans. The development of these units aligns with the Commonwealth's goal to create 1,000 units of permanent supportive housing by 2015.³

Goal 2: Prevention. Veterans most at-risk of homelessness remain housed.

To effectively prevent future homelessness among veterans, we must identify and prioritize at-risk households for assistance that will help them stabilize. At the local level, partners must share information, referrals, and create a “no wrong door” approach. Collaboration, communication, and targeted resource allocation will be crucial to achieving this goal. In fact, Massachusetts offers a unique and powerful platform for universal homelessness prevention among low-income veterans. The Legislature authorized a state benefit during the Civil War, known as “Chapter 115”, that provides financial support for basic needs to veterans and their dependents. Each city or town in the Commonwealth appoints or shares a Veteran Service Officer (VSO) to administer Chapter 115 benefits. VSOs utilize Chapter 115 benefits to stabilize and support eligible veterans every day and increasing access to this system of support is a priority strategy.

Another critical prevention resource, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), is contracted to service providers through the VA. SSVF is a limited resource, unlike Chapter 115 benefits, and thus recipients must be well-targeted in order to achieve the most impact. To this end, the VA recently released a targeting tool to prioritize households most at-risk of homelessness for SSVF. The SSVF program also offers case management to help households stabilize.

However, Chapter 115 benefits and SSVF resources alone will not end homelessness among veterans. Some veterans are ineligible or need more support than these resources can offer. In

³ <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter58>

other cases, veterans do not know they are eligible or do not reach out for help in time. Mainstream systems will need support and training on how to screen for veteran status and make appropriate referrals. The “no wrong door” approach may be further facilitated through electronic resource databases such as massvetsadvisor.org, launched in spring 2012 to help connect veterans to resources no matter where they first seek help. Regional Networks and/or Continua of Care will be instrumental in facilitating communication and convening partners to create a system for identifying and serving at-risk veterans.

HUD’s Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) is distributed locally and through DHCD, and is designed to identify sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, as well as those at risk of homelessness. It provides the services necessary to help them regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis or homeless episode. All ESG recipients – including State ESG recipients – coordinate with CoCs in their geographic area in preparing both their homelessness strategy and plan for allocation of resources to address the needs of homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. HUD highly encourages ESG grantees and CoCs to develop a working partnership with the local VSOs to identify and prioritize homeless and at-risk veterans for funding.

Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) can also be a critical partner in efforts to prevent homelessness among veterans, but more information and collaboration is necessary. Currently, state-aided public housing has a preference in place for veterans, and homeless veterans have an even higher preference. Thus, there is a basis for housing authorities to identify ways to support this population. However, housing authorities commonly face challenges in providing services to those housed in their units because of limited funding and staff resources. A key strategy to overcome these challenges is to connect housing authorities with their local Veterans’ Service Officer. A clearly defined protocol that outlines how the VSO and housing authority will work together can improve access to Ch. 115 and other resources for veterans in public housing. Further, housing authorities can serve as an early warning system, identifying veterans who fall behind on rent or exhibit other indicators of some instability. Those veterans, in particular should be referred to Veterans’ Service Officers for assistance prior to eviction in an attempt to resolve crises and maintain stability in public housing. This model would build off successful examples implemented for other at-risk populations in public housing.

Philanthropic funding is also a key resource that can supplement homelessness prevention efforts. Oftentimes, these resources are more flexible and can be leveraged in a way to fill service gaps and maximize efficiency of other resources.

Goal 3: Intervention. Homeless veterans have increased access to housing, benefits and other resources.

Homeless veterans do not always disclose their veteran status. Some may leave service with desire to disconnect from the military or VA, some are discharged with less than honorable status, and others are ashamed of their difficulties after discharge and do not wish to ask for help from entities associated with the military. Furthermore, individuals living outside, including unsheltered veterans, are often distrustful of shelters, service programs, or the VA due to past experiences and trauma. For all these reasons, engaging and connecting some homeless veterans to benefits poses substantial challenges. One key strategy for benefit maximization has been to advocate for discharge status upgrades among veterans with less than honorable discharges. In addition, local and national efforts provide evidence that peer-to-peer engagement among veterans in the community is highly effective.

In 2011, DVS launched the Statewide Housing and Advocacy for Reintegration and Prevention (SHARP) teams that utilize peers to identify homeless veterans, connect them with resources,

and stabilize them in housing. These teams are funded through the VA and provide additional peer support to identify and stabilize veterans housed with VASH vouchers. There is broad consensus that peer-to-peer engagement teams like SHARP are critical to reaching veterans on the street and in the community.

Engagement strategies must cast a wide net to reach the most vulnerable homeless veterans in our community. Examples of these sites include soup kitchens, food banks, VA clinics in the community, emergency shelters, drop-in centers, emergency rooms, and other locations where veterans gather. Outreach approaches could include targeted public service announcements, training for first-responders and non-veteran service agencies, or hosting an open house with the local Veteran Service Officer.

Last, housing and service resources must match needs of homeless veterans, particularly those who are ineligible or choose not to engage with the VA and other providers. Since permanent supportive housing resources are scarce, targeting tools like vulnerability indices are useful to prioritize individuals most in need. Within the housing-first service delivery paradigm, chronically homeless individuals enter low-threshold housing⁴ without additional conditions such as sobriety. Once housed, tenants are required to comply with their lease agreement and supports are offered to help them remain in housing. To reach the ultimate goal of ending homelessness, these low-threshold housing options must be available to the most vulnerable chronically homeless veterans, including those who do not qualify for VA or state benefits.

Goal 4: Partnerships. Federal, state, and community resources are aligned and integrated to support veterans.

None of the strategies contained in this plan will be effectively implemented without strong, strategic partnerships. Thus, the development of appropriate and effective partnerships across multiple sectors warrants its own attention. Continua of Care and Regional Networks to End Homelessness are well-positioned to provide the framework and context for more targeted and purposeful collaborations among relevant stakeholders. The ICHH and HUD should partner with each Regional Network and Continuum of Care to establish working groups on ending veteran homelessness for the purpose of implementing regionalized strategies associated with each of the goals outlined in this plan. Under the HEARTH Act, CoCs are now required to create a subcommittee to address veterans' homelessness. The Steering Committee will also provide technical assistance to regional working groups and CoCs by sharing best practices and ensuring participation from federal and state agencies.

The VA has also begun contracting with DVS in order to develop the capacity of communities to serve veterans where they live. The Steering Committee will look to additional opportunities to expand this model with DVS and community-based agencies. The potential benefit is expedited service delivery and a leverage of local expertise.

A commonly cited challenge by service providers working with homeless and at-risk veterans is that information about resources and programming is unclear and systems are difficult to

⁴ Low-threshold housing is defined as a paradigm shift in service delivery related to permanent supportive housing where tenancy is not conditioned upon accepting services or compliance to program rules, case plans or program objectives but rather upon the ordinary and regular expectations associated with tenancy. Services in this model are focused on assisting the tenant with all that is necessary for sustaining his or her tenancy and emphasize the engagement and choice of the tenant. (MHSA, 2008)

navigate from the outside. In 2012 DVS began to respond to this challenge by launching www.massvetsadvisor.org to help organize information about resources and benefits for veterans. However, more can be done. Joint interagency and cross-sector trainings focused on key challenges can provide an opportunity to eliminate siloes and improve veterans' access to assistance.

Action Plan

Goal 1- HOUSING: Veterans who become homeless are re-housed and stabilized.			
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Action Plan</i>	<i>Agencies Involved</i>	<i>Target Date</i>
<p>A. End the homelessness of 450 chronically homeless veterans.</p> <p>Target: Reduce chronic homeless veteran count from 450 to 0 in 3 years (currently determined through estimates, needs data improvement)</p> <p>Baseline: Estimated 450 chronically homeless veterans in 2012.</p>	<p>1. Maximize utilization of new HUD VASH Vouchers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage a coordinated strategy to ensure Massachusetts receives a total of 700 HUD VASH vouchers over the next 2 years (2013 and 2014). 	<p>HUD*, VA*, DHCD</p>	<p>350 vouchers in 2013; 350 vouchers in 2014</p>
	<p>2. Produce 250 new permanent supportive housing units targeted to chronically homeless veterans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage submission of permanent supportive housing projects for chronically homeless veterans to DHCD. Highlight in 2013 QAP that DHCD currently prioritizes homeless veterans housing projects and they can be proposed outside of the usual DHCD funding rounds. - Include a specific veteran focused incentive in the extremely low income (ELI) category for the updated pre-approval process categories in the 2013 QAP. - At least 100 of these new units will be supported through project-based HUD VASH vouchers. - Reserve at least 25 of these new units for chronically homeless veterans not eligible for VA services 	<p>DHCD*</p>	<p>2013 - 2015</p>
	<p>3. Identify and assess chronically homeless veterans and target housing and wrap around services accordingly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop method to ensure that the most vulnerable chronically homeless veterans across the state are prioritized for VASH or other permanent supportive housing. - Establish Coordinated Assessment through CoCs that includes a standardized assessment tool/vulnerability index. - Target 150 HUD VASH vouchers to access existing housing for chronically homeless veterans. 	<p>MHSA*, VA*, DHCD*, HUD*, DVS, CoCs, philanthropy</p>	<p>2013 – 2015</p>

<p>B-171</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Target 50 subsidies through DHCD initiatives to access existing housing for chronically homeless veterans not eligible for VA resources. - Leverage Home and Healthy for Good to create supportive housing units for chronically homeless veterans who are ineligible for VASH. 		
	<p>4. Use HUD VASH, Grant and Per Diem (GPD), and non-HUD VASH rental assistance to leverage wrap around services that help support the tenancies of VA eligible and non-VA eligible chronically homeless veterans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement the “transition-in-place” model and other strategies to support conversion from transitional housing to permanent supportive housing. 	<p>ICHH*, MHSA*, DVS*, VA, GPD providers, CoCs</p>	<p>2014</p>
	<p>5. Expand housing access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement strategies to attract landlords, realtors, and property managers willing to rent to chronically homeless veterans. - DHCD will reiterate the veteran preference in state-aided public housing to all Housing Authorities. - Expand housing search capacity. 	<p>DHCD*, DVS, HUD, VA, CoCs</p>	<p>2013</p>
<p><i>B. Rapidly rehouse all nonchronically homeless veterans</i></p> <p>Target: Reduce total Point In Time Count by 1,000 in 3 years</p> <p>Baseline: In January 2011, Point In Time Count included 1,268 homeless total veterans, of whom approximately 800 were non-chronically homeless veterans.</p>	<p>1. Enhance capacity to rapidly identify and re-house non-chronic and newly homeless veterans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and build on an existing triage models to rapidly identify appropriate housing for homeless veterans. - Engage regional partnerships between VSOs, Housing Authorities, Regional Housing Agencies, Regional Homeless Networks and Continua of Care. - Rapidly identify homeless veterans through the development of long-term stayers lists and other strategies, and fast track them into permanent housing options and wrap around services. - Develop “in-reach” strategies to re-house homeless veterans using Ch. 115 benefits, ESG and SSVF by partnering VSOs and other providers with mainstream and veteran shelters, as well as street outreach teams. - Target up to 450 HUD VASH vouchers to rapidly rehouse homeless veterans, particularly those with a disability, who are not 	<p>MHSA*, DHCD, DVS, VA, SSVF providers, VSOs, CoCs</p>	<p>2013 - 2015</p>

B-172	chronically homeless.		
	2. Use HUD VASH, Grant and Per Diem (GPD), and non-HUD VASH rental assistance to leverage wrap around services that help support the tenancies of VA eligible and non-VA eligible homeless veterans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement the “transition-in-place” strategy model and other strategies to support conversion from transitional housing to permanent supportive housing. 	VA, SSVF grantees, DVS, VA GPD providers, philanthropy	2013 - 2014
	5. Expand housing access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement strategies to attract landlords, realtors, and property managers willing to rent to homeless veterans. - DHCD will reiterate the veteran preference in state-aided public housing to all Housing Authorities. - Expand housing search capacity. 	DHCD*, DVS, HUD, VA	2013 - 2014
Goal 2 - PREVENTION: Veterans most at-risk of homelessness remain housed.			
Strategy	Action Plan	Agencies Involved	Target Date
<p><i>A. Match veterans most at-risk of losing their housing with prevention resources, mainstream benefits, and treatment to stabilize their tenancies</i></p> <p>Target: Increase number of veterans receiving Chapter 115 benefits at least 25% by 2015.</p> <p>Baseline: 8,515 veterans received Chapter 115 benefits in January 2012.</p> <p>Target: Increase number of veterans receiving VA healthcare by 5,000 per year.</p>	1. Maximize use of Chapter 115 benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve ability to track housing outcomes for Ch. 115 recipients who are at-risk of homelessness. 	DVS*, VSOs	2013-2015
	2. Enhance coordination and targeting of Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement SSVF targeting tool to prioritize veteran households most at-risk of homelessness for assistance. - Improve ability to track housing outcomes for SSVF recipients across MA. 	VA*, SSVF grantees, TAC	2013 – 2014
	3. Enhance screening for veteran status and referral to specialized services through CoC-sponsored coordinated assessment.	HUD*, CoCs	2013 – 2014

<p>B-173 Baseline: 80,318 veterans received VA healthcare in MA in March 2012.</p>			
<p><i>B. Partner with Housing Authorities to Prevent Evictions of veterans</i></p> <p>Target: Decrease the number of veterans evicted from Local Housing Authorities</p> <p>Baseline: Determined by each Local Housing Authorities</p>	<p>1. Coordinate initiatives to connect housing authorities with their local Veterans’ Service Officer, DVS peer to peer program, and other community based resources to prevent eviction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish protocol for Housing Authorities to collaborate with VSOs and DVS to reduce evictions by improving access to Ch. 115 and other benefits. 	<p>DHCD*, DVS, ICHH, VA, VSOs, philanthropy</p>	<p>2013</p>
	<p>2. DVS and VA provide veterans’ resource and awareness training to Housing Authority staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Train Local Housing Authorities to proactively identify at-risk veterans in their units and make appropriate referrals. 	<p>DVS*, VA*, DHCD</p>	<p>2013</p>
<p>Goal 3 – INTERVENTION: Homeless veterans have increased access to housing, benefits and other resources.</p>			
<p>Strategy</p>	<p>Action Plan</p>	<p>Agencies Involved</p>	<p>Target Date</p>
<p><i>A. Utilize low-threshold outreach and housing programs to connect underserved homeless veterans with benefits</i></p> <p>Target: Increase number of homeless veterans engaged by SHARP, Safe Havens, and street outreach teams</p> <p>Baseline: 50-60 veterans have been served via the SHARP outreach program in the first year.</p>	<p>1. Implement initiatives to help more homeless veterans successfully upgrade their discharge status to help them qualify for VA and DVS benefits and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track and increase number of discharges upgraded. 	<p>VA*, DVS*</p>	<p>2013</p>
	<p>2. Expand peer to peer outreach and engagement, including developing models that do in-reach to homeless veterans.</p>	<p>DVS*, CoCs</p>	<p>2013 - 2014</p>
	<p>3. Expand community capacity to serve veterans in the communities where they live by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand contracting of VA resources to qualified community based organizations - Develop “no-wrong door” protocols in communities to rapidly identify and refer veterans to appropriate resources. 	<p>VA*, DVS, CoCs</p>	<p>2013 - 2014</p>
	<p>4. Use chronic homeless lists and targeting tools such as vulnerability indices to identify the most vulnerable homeless veterans and prioritize them for very low threshold housing with wrap-around services to stabilize and maintain housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number of CoCs that compile lists of chronic 	<p>MHSA*, CoC, HUD</p>	<p>2013</p>

B-174	homeless veterans in their region. - Track and increase the number of homeless veterans assessed through a vulnerability index.		
	5. Identify opportunities to include homeless veterans in current and future initiatives regarding employment, training, and workforce development targeting Massachusetts veterans.	ICHH*, DVS*, VA*	2014
Goal 4 – PARTNERSHIP: Federal, state, and community resources are aligned and integrated to support homeless veterans			
Strategy	Action Plan	Agencies Involved	Target Date
<p><i>A. Identify partnership opportunities for efficiencies</i></p> <p><i>Target: All 10 Regional Networks to End Homelessness develop active working groups on veterans and report regularly to ICHH on strategies, progress and challenges.</i></p> <p><i>Target: All CoCs have participation from local veteran's shelters and housing providers funded by VA and DVS in Point in Time Count, Housing Inventory Chart, lists of chronically homeless veterans and other ongoing CoC efforts.</i></p>	1. Ensure the engagement of regional federal agency leadership to support the goals of Massachusetts Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness among Veterans through coordination with the New England Regional Federal Interagency Council on Homelessness.	HUD*, VA*, ICHH	2013
	2. Partner with each Regional Network to End Homelessness to establish working groups on ending veteran homelessness for the purpose of implementing regionalized strategies associated with each of the goals outlined in this plan.	ICHH*, CoCs	2013
	3. Provide technical assistance to regional veterans' working groups and CoCs, coordinated through the Steering Committee, by sharing best practices and ensuring participation from federal and state agencies.	HUD*, ICHH*, Steering Committee	2013 - 2015
	4. Identify and help implement initiatives to expand community capacity to serve veterans, including participation in local planning to prevent and end homelessness, and contracting opportunities for qualified community based organizations.	VA*, DVS*, HUD, CoCs	2014
	5. Identify opportunities to continue to engage and build engagement with statewide stakeholders organizations such as the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (MA NAHRO), the Regional Housing Network of MA, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA), private philanthropies, the MA Veterans Services Officers Association, etc. to help implement plan strategies.	Steering Committee	2013 – 2015
<i>B. Cross-train front-line staff across silos and sectors</i>	1. Enhance the capacity of organizations serving veterans to connect VA eligible and non-VA eligible veterans to housing,	MHSA*, TAC*, VA, DVS, DHCD	2013 – 2015

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Target: Increase knowledge and capacity among service providers and community partners as evidenced by pre and post-training assessments.

mainstream and veteran benefits, and employment to help move them on a trajectory to permanent housing.

- Increase front-line capacity through cross-training on priority topics such as upgrading discharges, low-threshold housing models, and maximizing state and federal benefits.

2. Enhance awareness and capacity among community partners, such as first-responders, food pantry and food stamp workers, housing authorities, emergency shelters, among others to improve screening and referrals (part of “no wrong door” protocol implementation).

ICHH

VA*, DVS*,
ICHH, MHSA

2014

Implementation and Assessment

The Massachusetts Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness among Veterans is designed for implementation over the course of a three year period – 2013-2015. Thus, implementation must begin immediately and be carried out with urgency. In order to achieve the goals set forth in the plan, the Steering Committee recommends a basic implementation structure that will provide oversight and accountability as well as a framework for engaging multiple stakeholders in carrying out specific strategies.

The Steering Committee will remain active throughout the plan's implementation, and will serve as the oversight committee to ensure progress against goals. Additionally, this committee will be responsible for ensuring appropriate stakeholders from all relevant sectors are engaged in implementation. It will also serve as the body to report on overall progress to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and legislature annually. The Steering Committee should work closely with the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness to assist in coordinating resources. The Steering Committee will meet at least quarterly to review progress, identify challenges and barriers, and highlight emerging best practices.

The first order of business for the Steering Committee will be to establish Working Groups related to each of the four primary goals contained in the plan. The Steering Committee will identify lead parties responsible for chairing each Working Group, and will charge each with engaging a diverse stakeholder group. Each Working Group should identify the parties necessary for implementing the strategies named herein. The Working Groups will report on their progress and make recommendations to the Steering Committee quarterly. The Steering Committee will provide guidance, resources, and technical assistance as necessary to ensure each Working Group's success.

The Steering Committee has also recognized that some current funding streams are designed to pay community-based partners to have their emergency and transitional beds filled with homeless veterans. To reduce reliance on shelter and expand permanent housing opportunities, we need to examine how the agencies that work with our homeless veterans are funded and reward programs that move veterans out of homelessness and support them in independent living to reduce the possibility of recidivism. As such, the Steering Committee will launch a demonstration project in Year 1 of this plan to test the feasibility of conversion strategies that allow providers to utilize existing veteran's emergency and transitional housing resources for permanent housing and community-based supports. The Steering Committee will look to the National Center on Homelessness among Veterans as a partner and resource in this particular effort as well as in the full implementation of this plan.

The Steering Committee believes that much of the plan must be coordinated and implemented at the local level where coordination among providers of VA, DVS, DHCD, HUD, and other programs is essential. The Steering Committee and Working Groups will formally bring together the existing efforts of the ICHH Regional Networks, CoCs, VSOs and community-based providers to more effectively end veterans' homelessness as outlined in the Partnership section of this plan.

The Steering Committee strongly encourages CoCs to play a lead role in each of the Working Groups to effectively carry out the plan's goals. In addition, the Steering

Committee expects that each CoC is working to develop or strengthen their local subcommittee on veterans. A highly functioning veterans subcommittee within each CoC will increase their competitiveness under the requirements of the HEARTH Act⁵ as well as placing the CoCs in a desirable position to receive funding from DHCD, DVS, and HUD. For example, funding awards for veterans' supported housing and services will prioritize CoCs that demonstrate they have a formal working veterans' subcommittee that meets the criteria of the plan.

This enhanced CoC participation fits into the priorities and requirements of continued funding under the HEARTH Act. A formal committee structure will include an organizational chart that outlines all of the required strategies of the plan and an inventory of the agencies and persons responsible for coordination with the CoCs. A formal agreement includes specific policies and procedures for coordination among providers of homeless outreach services, emergency shelter, essential services, homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing assistance, transitional and PSH homeless assistance, and mainstream services and housing providers. Such CoC subcommittees will be responsible for identifying homeless and at-risk veterans, maintaining an HMIS database, and developing written standards to determine the type and amount of resources required to stabilize and house local veterans based on a vulnerability index. The Steering Committee will specifically work with each CoC to establish a list of homeless veterans in their community in order to prioritize rehousing and support services. This step is critical to track progress and outcomes for specific individuals, as well as to understand the scope of veterans becoming newly homeless and accessing systems of care.

In addition to Working Groups focused on each of the four primary goals of this plan, the Steering Committee will launch a Data Committee to set a course for improving data across systems. Data quality and accessibility was identified as a core barrier in the planning process. In order for the Steering Committee and its partners to understand the effectiveness of implementation it is essential that data challenges are ameliorated. The Data Committee will have responsibility for improving data associated with all four goals, and must partner closely with the goal-focused working groups. The Data Committee will report on its progress and make recommendations to the Steering Committee quarterly.

Data on homeless veterans come from multiple sources, making it difficult to create a single report on homeless veterans in the Commonwealth. This section outlines data sources explored in the development of this Plan, limitations of the data, and improvement goals.

The VA currently uses CHALENG to capture and report on homeless veterans who use VA services. However, the VA serves a subset of all veterans in the Commonwealth and, likewise, a subset of homeless veterans. Many homeless veterans are ineligible for VA services or prefer not to be connected to the VA, making CHALENG an incomplete data source. The VA is in process of adopting HUD's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data standards to track homeless veterans, but currently captures data in a distinct format.

Mainstream homeless shelters that receive HUD funding are required to utilize HMIS for client information and to participate in the Point in Time count in January. Unfortunately, HMIS data is sent directly to HUD and the MA Department of Housing and Community

⁵ For additional information and background on the HEARTH Act see: <http://www.hudhre.info/hearth/>.

Development (DHCD) does not have access to every community's HMIS data. Further, data quality for critical fields such as exit information, veteran status or chronic homelessness is often incomplete. In addition, shelters funded by the MA Department of Veteran Services (DVS) have not historically participated in HMIS, though DVS plans to require HMIS participation. For these reasons, the Point in Time count remains the most reliable snapshot of veteran homelessness across the state that can be used to compare from one year to the next.

However, some local communities have made significant strides understanding their homeless veteran population through HMIS. Boston's Continuum of Care spent several years improving data on homeless veterans and in 2011 their data was accepted to be included in the Veteran Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR). Boston's ability to report on their homeless veteran population has helped us create a statewide estimate of the number of chronically homeless veterans.

In addition to the indicators we will track as part of this Plan, we have several data improvement goals. First, we aim to improve the accuracy of our statewide count of homeless veterans and chronically homeless veterans. Second, we strive to be able to describe homeless veterans across the Commonwealth by aggregating data from every community. To this end, the MA Department of Veterans' Services will start to require participation in HMIS in contracts from its homeless service providers. DHCD is also working to synchronize the majority of HMIS systems statewide. Third, we will work toward gathering baseline data and creating a strategy for tracking progress on additional priority targets such as those proposed in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Additional Recommended Targets

The following targets are proposed in addition to those previously noted above as important measures for future tracking. Statewide baseline data is needed to measure against each proposed target. This list will help guide the work of the Data Committee.

Target: Reduce the number of veterans who experience homelessness over the course of one year by 70% by 2015. Data source: Apply methodologies from HUD AHAR to MA data

Baseline: In FFY 2011, 1,235 veterans used emergency shelter and 921 veterans used transitional housing in Boston only. Baseline for state unknown.

Target: Reduce number of newly homeless veterans in MA. Data source: HMIS, VA data.

Baseline: Unknown

Target: Reduce average length of stay in shelter to 30 days by 2015. Data source: HMIS

Baseline: Unknown for state

Target: Reduce time to lease-up for VASH recipients.

Baseline: Unknown

Target: Demographic and risk-factor characteristics among veterans who receive prevention interventions mirrors characteristics among homeless veterans. This includes % women, average age, average income, history of homelessness, recent institutional discharge, or other risk factors. Data sources: HMIS, Ch. 115 data, VA data, SSFV recipient data.

Baseline: Unknown

Target: At least 85% housing retention rate for 12 months among formerly chronically homeless veterans who are tenants through VASH, Home and Healthy for Good, or other Permanent Supportive Housing programs.

Baseline: As of February 2012, 88% of the 105 veterans enrolled in Home and Healthy for Good retained housing (since the program began). Unknown for other programs.