

Appendix C: Independent Reports and Documents

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Valor Act

Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services

Description

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The Valor Act was established to provide support to Veterans and their families in a number of different ways, including:

Adds Veteran-owned businesses to the list of businesses that may receive special supports from the Commonwealth's Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) (currently the statute references minority and women-owned businesses);

Directs the SDO to promulgate regulations to encourage public construction and design projects for service disabled Veteran-owned small businesses;

Requires the Board of Higher Education to develop a written policy that requires public higher education institutions to develop policies regarding the granting of academic credit for a student's prior or concurrent military occupation, training and coursework, and requires higher education institutions to designate a single point of contact for student Veterans;

Adopts the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which streamlines the process for school-aged children of military personnel to transfer between school districts and states and provides additional supports for said children (Massachusetts currently is one of only 8 non-member states);

Eliminates the \$2,500 cap that applies to years six and beyond of the property tax abatement for surviving spouses of soldiers, sailors and National Guard members killed as the result of an injury sustained or a disease contracted in a combat zone

Requires that the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) be a Veteran;

Establishes a municipal Veteran volunteer program under which municipalities may reduce the property tax bills of Veterans who volunteer their time (the bill directs that such Veterans must be treated as employees for the purposes of Unemployment Insurance (UI) and that their property tax deductions be treated as remunerations for unemployment benefits purposes, thus complying with federal UI law);

Requires the RMV to, upon request, provide active duty service-members with license plates that include an emblem identifying the member's Armed Services branch (RMV can charge a fee of up to \$35);

Advances certain recommendations set forth in the White House Report: Supporting our Military Families: Best Practices for Streamlining Occupational Licensing Across State Lines, including: (1) provides that service-members with a license or certificate issued by the Department of Public Safety or the Division of Professional Licensure have at least 90 days after returning from active duty to renew their license or certificate, (2) directs those licensing entities to accept education, training or service completed by service-members towards the qualifications required to receive the license or certification in question, and (3) directs the licensing entities to expedite the issuance of a license or certification to spouses of military personnel, licensed in another jurisdiction, who relocate due to a military transfer

Requires probation officers in district court to use best efforts to determine, at or prior to arraignment, whether a criminal defendant is a Veteran, on active duty, or has otherwise served in the military; at a judge's discretion, any such defendant, who has no prior convictions, may be granted a 14-day continuance to determine whether he or she is eligible for diversion to treatment services in lieu of imprisonment;

Directs the Court Administrator to study and make recommendations on: (1) the adoption of a court training program to assist court personnel in recognizing veterans' issues and determining the appropriate treatment for system-involved veterans, (2) the intake and review process and disposition, including treatment and diversion options, of Veterans and service-members facing criminal complaints, and (3) parenting and custody issues faced by parents on active military duty;

Requires EOHHS, in consultation with ANF, DVS and the Massachusetts Soldiers' Homes in Chelsea and Holyoke, to study the fiscal impact of designating a non-profit entity as an official state soldiers' home; and

Establishes a special commission to study and make recommendations relative to the training, certification, professional licensure, and accreditation of Veterans' benefits and services officers.

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How to Apply

For more information [visit the website of the Department of Veterans' Services](#) or contact your Veterans Service Officer (VSO).

Contact Info

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