

AN ACT concerning military affairs.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The Department of Veterans Affairs Act is amended by changing Sections 15, 20, and 37 as follows:

(20 ILCS 2805/15)

Sec. 15. Veterans advisory council.

(a) A veterans advisory council shall be established in the State of Illinois. The council shall consist of at least 21 members as follows:

(1) Four members of the General Assembly, appointed one each by the President of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, preferably from a legislative or representative district in which a State-operated veterans home is located.

(2) Six veterans appointed by the Director of Veterans' Affairs.

(3) One veteran appointed by the commander or president of each veterans service organization that is chartered by the federal government and by the State of Illinois and elects to appoint a member.

(4) One person appointed by the Adjutant General of the

Illinois National Guard.

(5) One person appointed by the Illinois Attorney General.

(6) One person appointed by the Illinois Secretary of State.

(7) One person appointed by the Director of the Illinois Department of Employment Security.

(8) One person appointed by each military family organization that is chartered by the federal government.

No member of the council shall be an employee or representative of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Members of the council shall serve without compensation or reimbursement.

(b) At the initial meeting of the council, the members shall elect from among themselves a chairman. The members shall draw lots to determine the length of their terms so that 9 members have terms that expire on July 1, 2005 and the remaining members have terms that expire on July 1, 2006. Thereafter, all members of the council shall be appointed for terms of 2 years.

The appointing authority may at any time make an appointment to fill a vacancy for the unexpired term of a member.

(c) The council shall meet quarterly or at the call of the chairman or at the call of the Director of Veterans' Affairs or the Governor. The Department shall provide meeting space and

clerical and administrative support services for the council.

(c-5) The council shall investigate the re-entry process for service members who return to civilian life after being engaged in an active theater. The investigation shall include the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, homelessness, disabilities, and other issues the council finds relevant to the re-entry process. By July 1, 2018 and by July 1 of each year thereafter, the council shall present an annual report of its findings to the Governor, the Attorney General, the Director of Veterans' Affairs, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. The council's investigation and annual report responsibilities of this subsection shall be a continuation of the investigation and annual report responsibilities of the Illinois Discharged Servicemembers Task Force created under Section 20 of this Act.

(d) The council has the power to do the following:

(1) Advise the Department of Veterans' Affairs with respect to the fulfillment of its statutory duties.

(2) Review and study the issues and concerns that are most significant to Illinois veterans and advise the Department on those issues and concerns.

(3) Receive a report from the Director of Veterans' Affairs or the Director's designee at each meeting with respect to the general activities of the Department.

(4) Report to the Governor and the General Assembly annually describing the issues addressed and the actions

taken by the council during the year as well as any recommendations for future action.

(e) The council established under this Section replaces any Illinois Veterans Advisory Council established under Executive Order No. 3 (1982).

(Source: P.A. 96-1266, eff. 7-26-10.)

(20 ILCS 2805/20)

Sec. 20. Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force. The Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force is hereby created within the Department of Veterans' ~~Veterans~~ Affairs. The Task Force shall investigate the re-entry process for service members who return to civilian life after being engaged in an active theater. The investigation shall include the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, homelessness, disabilities, and other issues the Task Force finds relevant to the re-entry process. For fiscal year 2012, the Task Force shall include the availability of prosthetics in its investigation. For fiscal year 2014, the Task Force shall include the needs of women veterans with respect to issues including, but not limited to, compensation, rehabilitation, outreach, health care, and issues facing women veterans in the community, and to offer recommendations on how best to alleviate these needs which shall be included in the Task Force Annual Report for 2014. The Task Force shall include the following members:

(a) a representative of the Department of Veterans'

~~Veterans~~ Affairs, who shall chair the committee;

(b) a representative from the Department of Military Affairs;

(c) a representative from the Office of the Illinois Attorney General;

(d) a member of the General Assembly appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(e) a member of the General Assembly appointed by the House Minority Leader;

(f) a member of the General Assembly appointed by the President of the Senate;

(g) a member of the General Assembly appointed by the Senate Minority Leader;

(h) 4 members chosen by the Department of Veterans' ~~Veterans~~ Affairs, who shall represent statewide veterans' organizations or veterans' homeless shelters;

(i) one member appointed by the Lieutenant Governor; and

(j) a representative of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs shall be invited to participate.

Vacancies in the Task Force shall be filled by the initial appointing authority. Task Force members shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in performing duties associated with the Task Force.

By July 1, 2008 and by July 1 of each year thereafter through July 1, 2017, the Task Force shall present an annual

report of its findings to the Governor, the Attorney General, the Director of Veterans' Affairs, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. As soon as is practicable after the Task Force presents its final report due by July 1, 2017, any information collected by the Task Force in carrying out its duties under this Section shall be transferred to the Illinois Veterans' Advisory Council.

The Task Force is dissolved, and this Section is repealed, on July 1, 2018.

~~If the Task Force becomes inactive because active theaters cease, the Director of Veterans Affairs may reactivate the Task Force if active theaters are reestablished.~~

(Source: P.A. 97-414, eff. 1-1-12; 98-310, eff. 8-12-13; revised 9-8-16.)

(20 ILCS 2805/37)

Sec. 37. Illinois Joining Forces Foundation.

(a) The General Assembly finds that navigating the "sea of goodwill" for those who serve in uniform is one of the greatest challenges that transitioning veterans face; as a result, they risk being unable to access many of the federal, State, and non-profit resources available to them. Recognizing this problem, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Military Affairs acted to establish the Illinois Joining Forces initiative, a public-private network of military and

veteran-serving organizations that are working together, in person and online, to create a no-wrong-door system of support for the State's military and veteran communities. Illinois Joining Forces is a nation-leading model, awarded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs for its groundbreaking work in creating smarter, collaborative community support for those in uniform, past and present. The foundation created by this amendatory Act of the 98th General Assembly will serve to ensure the long-term sustainability of Illinois Joining Forces, which is critically important for the support of the State's military and veteran communities.

(b) The Illinois Joining Forces Foundation shall benefit service members, veterans, and their families by:

(1) convening military and veteran support organizations, through Illinois Joining Forces working groups, to build cross-sector relationships and mutual awareness;

(2) providing policy recommendations through Illinois Joining Forces member working groups to ~~the Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force~~ and the Illinois Veterans' Advisory Council;

(3) facilitating the transfer of information and knowledge among Illinois Joining Forces member organizations;

(4) maintaining and continuing to build the

no-wrong-door online navigation platform;

(5) educating Illinois Joining Forces members and other community providers regarding military and veteran culture and needs, thus improving the collective capacity of the support system; and

(6) outreaching directly to service members, veterans, and their families regarding the no-wrong-door system that Illinois Joining Forces provides to them.

(c) For the purpose of this Section, "veterans service organization" means an organization that meets all of the following criteria:

(1) The organization is formed by and for United States military veterans.

(2) The organization is chartered by the United States Congress and incorporated in the State of Illinois.

(3) The organization has maintained a State headquarters office in Illinois for the 10-year period immediately preceding the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 98th General Assembly.

(4) The organization maintains at least one office in this State, staffed by a veterans service officer.

(5) The organization is capable of preparing a power of attorney for a veteran and processing claims for veterans services.

(6) The organization is not funded by the State of Illinois or by any county in this State.

(d) The General Assembly authorizes the Department of Veterans' Affairs, in accordance with Section 10 of the State Agency Entity Creation Act, to create the Illinois Joining Forces Foundation as a not-for-profit foundation. The Department shall file articles of incorporation as required under the General Not For Profit Corporation Act of 1986 to create the Foundation. The Foundation's Board of Directors shall be appointed as follows: one member appointed by the Governor; one member appointed by the President of the Senate; one member appointed by the Minority Leader of the Senate; one member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; one member appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives; and all of the members of the Illinois Joining Forces Executive Committee, who shall be appointed by the Director of Veterans' Affairs. In addition to any veterans service organization otherwise represented on the Board of Directors, a veterans service organization may designate in writing an ex officio, non-voting participant to the Board of Directors. Any veterans service organization appointee under this Section does not count towards a quorum. The Director of Veterans' Affairs and a designee chosen by the Director of Military Affairs who is a senior management official of the Department of Military Affairs with the authority to make decisions on behalf of the agency shall serve as members of the Foundation's Board of Directors. Board of Director appointments shall be for 2-year terms. Vacancies

shall be filled by the official who made the recommendation for the vacated appointment. No member of the Board of Directors may receive compensation for his or her services to the Foundation. Upon appointment, the Board of Directors, as members of a public entity, shall be represented and indemnified pursuant to the requirements of the State Employee Indemnification Act.

(e) The purposes of the Foundation are to: promote, support, assist, and sustain Illinois Joining Forces operations; solicit and accept grants and private donations and disburse them for the stated intent of the Foundation or the private donor; solicit and generate public and private funding and donations that assist in enhancing the Illinois Joining Forces mission, services, programs, and operations; and engage generally in other lawful endeavors consistent with the foregoing purposes. The foundation shall operate within the provisions of the General Not For Profit Corporation Act of 1986.

(f) As soon as practicable after the Foundation is created, the Board of Directors shall meet, organize, and designate, by majority vote, a chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary, and any additional officers that may be needed to carry out the activities of the Foundation and shall adopt bylaws of the Foundation. The Department of Veterans' Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Military Affairs, may adopt other rules deemed necessary to govern Foundation procedures.

(g) The Foundation may request and accept gifts, grants, donations, or bequests from the federal government or its agencies or officers or from any person, firm, or corporation, and may expend receipts on activities that it considers suitable to the performance of its duties under this Section and consistent with any requirement of the grant, gift, donation, or bequest. Funds collected by the Foundation shall be considered private funds and shall be held in an appropriate account outside of the State treasury. Private funds collected by the Foundation are not subject to the Public Funds Investment Act. The treasurer of the Foundation shall be the custodian of all Foundation funds. The treasurer shall be required to obtain a fidelity or surety bond on satisfactory terms and in sufficient amounts to protect the interests of the Foundation, the cost of which shall be reimbursed by the Foundation. The Foundation and its officers shall be responsible for the approval of the recording of receipts, approval of payments, and the proper filing of required reports. The Foundation may be assisted in carrying out its functions by Department of Military Affairs and Department of Veterans' Affairs personnel. The Department of Military Affairs and the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall provide reasonable assistance to the Foundation to achieve the purposes of the Foundation as determined by the respective Directors. The Foundation shall cooperate fully with the boards, commissions, agencies, departments, and institutions of the

State. The funds held and made available by the Illinois Joining Forces Foundation shall be subject to financial and compliance audits in accordance with the Illinois State Auditing Act. The Foundation shall not have any power of eminent domain. The Foundation shall not construct or make any permanent improvements to any real property.

(h) The Foundation must provide a written notice to any entity providing a gift, grant, donation, or bequest to the Foundation that the Foundation is not subject to the provisions of the Public Funds Investment Act, which Act places limitations on the types of securities in which a public agency may invest public funds.

(i) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the Foundation is not eligible for any grant administered or funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs or the Department of Military Affairs.

(Source: P.A. 98-986, eff. 8-18-14.)

Section 10. The Board of Higher Education Act is amended by changing Section 9.34 as follows:

(110 ILCS 205/9.34)

(Section scheduled to be repealed on December 1, 2017)

Sec. 9.34. Military Prior Learning Assessment Task Force.

(a) The Military Prior Learning Assessment Task Force is created within the Board of Higher Education. The Task Force

shall study and make recommendations on how to best effectuate the recognition of military learning for academic credit, industry-recognized credentials, and college degrees through the use of the Prior Learning Assessment. The Task Force shall be comprised of all of the following members:

(1) A representative from the Board of Higher Education, who shall chair the Task Force, appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(2) A representative from the Illinois Community College Board appointed by the Illinois Community College Board.

(3) A representative from the Department of Veterans' Affairs appointed by the Director of Veterans' Affairs.

(4) (Blank). ~~A representative from the Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force appointed by the Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force.~~

(5) A representative from the Illinois Student Assistance Commission appointed by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

(6) A member of the General Assembly appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(7) A member of the General Assembly appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

(8) A member of the General Assembly appointed by the President of the Senate.

(9) A member of the General Assembly appointed by the

Minority Leader of the Senate.

(10) Three faculty representatives, one from a public university, one from a public community college, and one from a private institution, appointed by the Board of Higher Education in consultation with the Illinois Community College Board and their advisory groups.

(11) Two presidents of Illinois colleges and universities appointed by the Board of Higher Education in consultation with the Illinois Community College Board.

(12) A representative from the Illinois Joining Forces Education Working Group appointed by the Illinois Joining Forces Education Working Group.

(13) A representative of a nonprofit organization that is recognized as having expertise in the area of the Prior Learning Assessment appointed by the Board of Higher Education.

(14) A representative from the Office of the State Fire Marshal appointed by the State Fire Marshal.

Members of the Task Force shall serve without compensation and may not be reimbursed for their expenses.

The Board of Higher Education shall provide administrative and other support to the Task Force.

(b) The Task Force's study shall without limitation:

(1) Examine the history of the Prior Learning Assessment and its impact on active military and student veterans in today's educational landscape.

(2) Examine policies and practices in other states to identify best practices in the Prior Learning Assessment for active military and student veterans.

(3) Determine current policies and practices in this State, including existing Prior Learning Assessment methods being utilized among this State's public and private colleges and universities in connection with active military and student veterans.

(4) Review the quality standards necessary to adequately assess military learning based on experience and non-credit education and training for purposes of awarding academic credit.

(5) Consider alternative means to award academic credit for active military and student veterans.

(6) Consider transferability of academic credit awarded by the Prior Learning Assessment and student mobility.

(7) Consider the importance of recognition of industry-recognized credentials by colleges and universities for the purpose of awarding academic credit.

(8) Consider the acceptance of industry-recognized credentials and academic credit credentials or degrees by licensing bodies.

(c) The Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, the Illinois Student Assistance

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Commission, the State Board of Education, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, ~~the Illinois Discharged Servicemember Task Force,~~ the General Assembly, and the Governor on or before December 1, 2016.

(d) This Section is repealed on December 1, 2017.

(Source: P.A. 99-395, eff. 8-18-15.)

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.