

AN ACT concerning State government.

**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 adding Section 37 as follows:

(20 ILCS 2805/37 new)

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.

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