



100TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2017 and 2018

HB2653

by Rep. Stephanie A. Kifowit

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

20 ILCS 2805/2h new

Amends the Department of Veterans Affairs Act. Contains provisions concerning the establishment of various programs and services for the benefit of veterans including a proactive outreach program for veterans that served in high casualty units, in units that experienced high conflict areas, and in units where at least one service member committed suicide following his or her service; a public awareness campaign concerning the trauma and internal injuries suffered by veterans; and a licensing program for therapy dogs for veterans. Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to adopt any rules necessary to implement these provisions.

LRB100 10892 MJP 21127 b

FISCAL NOTE ACT
MAY APPLY

A BILL FOR

1 AN ACT concerning State government.

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

4 Section 5. The Department of Veterans Affairs Act is
5 amended by adding Section 2h as follows:

6 (20 ILCS 2805/2h new)

7 Sec. 2h. Task Force on Veterans' Suicide recommendations.

8 The provisions of this Section are based on the recommendations
9 in the final report of the Task Force on Veterans' Suicide,
10 published on December 30, 2016. The Department shall adopt any
11 rules necessary to implement this Section.

12 (1) The Department shall reach out to the United States
13 Department of Defense in order to identify veterans
14 returning from service in heavy casualty units, units that
15 experienced high conflict areas, or units where at least
16 one service member committed suicide following his or her
17 service. The Department shall establish a proactive
18 outreach program for veterans that served in high casualty
19 units, in units that experienced high conflict areas, and
20 in units where at least one service member committed
21 suicide following his or her service.

22 (2) The Department or the Department in collaboration
23 with not-for-profit organizations shall engage in a public

1 awareness campaign concerning the trauma and internal
2 injuries suffered by veterans in order to promote
3 understanding and acceptance from the general public. The
4 public awareness campaign shall work to dispel the myths
5 associated with grieving, suicide, and mental health
6 healing. The Department shall evaluate existing programs,
7 including, but not limited to, the Suicide Prevention
8 Alliance under the Suicide Prevention, Education, and
9 Treatment Act, and coordinate messaging using messaging
10 guidelines that existing programs have found to be
11 successful.

12 (3) The Department shall develop a licensing program
13 for therapy dogs, with a possible extension to other
14 therapy animals, for veterans. The Department shall
15 develop standards for the training and identification of
16 therapy dogs for veterans. The designation of therapy dog
17 under this paragraph shall not qualify the dog to be a
18 service animal as provided under any other Act in this
19 State.