

1 AN ACT concerning military service.

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 39 as follows:

6 (20 ILCS 2805/39 new)

7 Sec. 39. Veterans' Accountability Unit.

8 (a) The Department shall create a Veterans' Accountability
9 Unit which shall receive complaints and recommendations from:
10 (i) veterans and other Illinois residents who seek services
11 from the Department; (ii) residents of Veterans' Homes, their
12 families, and visitors; (iii) vendors and contractors of the
13 Department; and (iv) staff of the Department.

14 (b) The Governor shall appoint, and the Senate shall
15 confirm, the Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit.
16 The Director shall be appointed for a term of 4 years.

17 (c) The Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit
18 shall ensure that the Unit maintains regular office hours and
19 establishes both a toll-free helpline and a dedicated
20 electronic mail address for the purpose of accepting
21 complaints, information, and recommendations. The Director
22 shall provide a reasonable means for receiving complaints
23 outside of office hours.

1 (d) The Veterans' Accountability Unit shall function
2 independently of the Department. The salary and benefits of
3 the Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit and any
4 other staff of the Unit, as deemed necessary by the Director,
5 along with all other expenses of the Unit shall be paid from
6 appropriations to the Department.

7 (e) The Director and staff of the Veterans' Accountability
8 Unit shall have the authority to access the offices or
9 facilities of the Department and the Veterans' Homes and shall
10 have access to all information, documents, and personnel of
11 the Department as needed to perform the duties of the
12 Veterans' Accountability Unit. It is the duty of every
13 employee of the Department to cooperate with the Veterans'
14 Accountability Unit. The Department shall provide the staff of
15 the Veterans' Accountability Unit with physical space in each
16 Department office and in each Veterans' Home to conduct
17 confidential business as needed to perform the work of the
18 Veterans' Accountability Unit.

19 (f) The Veterans' Accountability Unit shall ensure all
20 complaints, allegations, or incidents of possible misconduct,
21 misfeasance, malfeasance, or violations of rules, procedures,
22 or laws by any employee, service provider, or contractor of
23 the Department are reported to the Office of the Governor's
24 Executive Inspector General.

25 (g) The Office of the Governor's Executive Inspector
26 General shall assess the complaints, allegations, and

1 incidents and shall determine whether to (i) investigate, (ii)
2 refer to the appropriate agency, (iii) refer to any
3 appropriate law enforcement agency, (iv) request a response
4 from the Department to the complaint, allegations, or
5 incident, or (v) refer to the Veterans' Accountability Unit to
6 conduct further inquiry or review if necessary.

7 (h) The Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit may
8 recommend changes to the Director of Veterans' Affairs
9 concerning Department policies or practices based upon
10 information learned or observations made by the Veterans'
11 Accountability Unit staff during the course of its duties. The
12 Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit shall meet
13 regularly with the Office of the Governor's Executive
14 Inspector General to report this information to allow the
15 Office to determine whether further investigation is
16 necessary.

17 (i) The Veterans' Accountability Unit shall create an
18 annual report that includes a summary of the complaints
19 received and actions taken in response. This report shall not
20 include any referrals to the Office of the Governor's
21 Executive Inspector General that result in an investigation.
22 The summaries shall not contain any confidential or
23 identifying information concerning the subjects or
24 complainants of the reports and investigations.

25 (j) Nothing in this Section shall limit investigations by
26 the Department of Veterans' Affairs that may otherwise be

1 required by law or that may be necessary in that Department's
2 capacity as the central administrative authority on matters
3 concerning services to veterans, their survivors, and
4 dependents.