

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 Executive  
24 Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor.

25       (g) The Office of Executive Inspector General for the  
26 Agencies of the Illinois Governor shall assess the complaints,

1 allegations, and incidents and shall determine whether to (i)  
2 investigate, (ii) refer to the appropriate agency, (iii) refer  
3 to any appropriate law enforcement agency, (iv) request a  
4 response 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 Executive Inspector General for  
14 the Agencies of the Illinois Governor to report this  
15 information to allow the Office to determine whether further  
16 investigation is 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 Executive Inspector  
21 General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor that result  
22 in an investigation. The summaries shall not contain any  
23 confidential or identifying information concerning the  
24 subjects or 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.