

1 AN ACT concerning veterans.

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 changing Section 2 as follows:

6 (20 ILCS 2805/2) (from Ch. 126 1/2, par. 67)

7 Sec. 2. Powers and duties.

8 (a) The Department shall have the following powers and
9 duties:

10 To perform such acts at the request of any veteran, or his
11 or her spouse, surviving spouse or dependents as shall be
12 reasonably necessary or reasonably incident to obtaining or
13 endeavoring to obtain for the requester any advantage, benefit
14 or emolument accruing or due to such person under any law of
15 the United States, the State of Illinois or any other state or
16 governmental agency by reason of the service of such veteran,
17 and in pursuance thereof shall:

18 (1) Contact veterans, their survivors and dependents
19 and advise them of the benefits of state and federal laws
20 and assist them in obtaining such benefits;

21 (2) Establish field offices and direct the activities
22 of the personnel assigned to such offices;

23 (3) Create a volunteer field force of accredited

1 representatives, representing educational institutions,
2 labor organizations, veterans organizations, employers,
3 churches, and farm organizations;

4 (4) Conduct informational and training services;

5 (5) Conduct educational programs through newspapers,
6 periodicals and radio for the specific purpose of
7 disseminating information affecting veterans and their
8 dependents;

9 (6) Coordinate the services and activities of all state
10 departments having services and resources affecting
11 veterans and their dependents;

12 (7) Encourage and assist in the coordination of
13 agencies within counties giving service to veterans and
14 their dependents;

15 (8) Cooperate with veterans organizations and other
16 governmental agencies;

17 (9) Make, alter, amend and promulgate reasonable rules
18 and procedures for the administration of this Act;

19 (10) Make and publish annual reports to the Governor
20 regarding the administration and general operation of the
21 Department;

22 (11) Encourage the State to implement more programs to
23 address the wide range of issues faced by Persian Gulf War
24 Veterans, especially those who took part in combat, by
25 creating an official commission to further study Persian
26 Gulf War Diseases. The commission shall consist of 9

1 members appointed as follows: the Speaker and Minority
2 Leader of the House of Representatives and the President
3 and Minority Leader of the Senate shall each appoint one
4 member from the General Assembly, the Governor shall
5 appoint 4 members to represent veterans' organizations,
6 and the Department shall appoint one member. The commission
7 members shall serve without compensation; and

8 (12) Conduct an annual review of the benefits received
9 by Illinois veterans that compares benefits received by
10 Illinois veterans with the benefits received by veterans in
11 all other states and U.S. territories. The required annual
12 review shall include, but not be limited to, (1) the
13 average benefit paid to individual veterans from Illinois,
14 in direct comparison to the average benefit paid to
15 individual veterans of each of the other states and U.S.
16 territories; (2) the number of veterans receiving benefits
17 in Illinois for the first time during the year compared to
18 the number of claims filed by Illinois veterans during the
19 year; (3) the aggregate number of Illinois veterans
20 receiving benefits compared to the number of veterans from
21 each of the other states and U.S. territories receiving
22 benefits; and (4) a categorical analysis of the types of
23 injuries and disabilities for which benefits are being paid
24 in Illinois and each of the other states and U.S.
25 territories. The benefits review shall be reported to the
26 Governor, the General Assembly, and the Illinois

1 Congressional delegation upon the completion of the report
2 each year.

3 (b) The Department shall create and administer a suicide
4 prevention program for veterans of the armed forces, including
5 redeployed veterans of the Illinois National Guard. The program
6 shall become operational within 100 days after the effective
7 date of this amendatory Act of the 95th General Assembly. The
8 program's primary goal shall be to address and reduce the
9 incidence of suicide and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
10 among veterans of the military and the National Guard
11 (hereinafter, "veterans").

12 The program shall provide the following:

13 (1) Public education and awareness programs directed
14 at veterans, the families of veterans, health care
15 professionals, mental health professionals, and the
16 public, focusing on recognizing the signs, symptoms, and
17 behavioral patterns of those at risk of committing suicide
18 and those suffering from PTSD.

19 (2) Psychiatric, psychological, or other appropriate
20 mental health care services to veterans at risk of suicide.

21 (3) Referral services to appropriate mental health
22 care services for veterans afflicted by PTSD.

23 (4) Any other services the Director of the Department
24 deems appropriate for addressing and reducing the
25 incidence of suicide and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
26 among veterans.

1 The Director of the Department shall submit an annual
2 report to the members of the General Assembly no later than
3 June 15 of each year, outlining the program's activities from
4 the preceding year.

5 The Department of Military Affairs shall disseminate
6 information regarding the suicide prevention program
7 established pursuant to this subsection to all redeployed
8 members of the Illinois National Guard within 72 hours after
9 their redeployment.

10 (c) The Department may accept and hold on behalf of the
11 State, if for the public interest, a grant, gift, devise or
12 bequest of money or property to the Department made for the
13 general benefit of Illinois veterans, including the conduct of
14 informational and training services by the Department and other
15 authorized purposes of the Department. The Department shall
16 cause each grant, gift, devise or bequest to be kept as a
17 distinct fund and shall invest such funds in the manner
18 provided by the Public Funds Investment Act, as now or
19 hereafter amended, and shall make such reports as may be
20 required by the Comptroller concerning what funds are so held
21 and the manner in which such funds are invested. The Department
22 may make grants from these funds for the general benefit of
23 Illinois veterans. Grants from these funds, except for the
24 funds established under Sections 2.01a and 2.03, shall be
25 subject to appropriation.

26 (d) The Department has the power to make grants, from funds

1 appropriated from the Korean War Veterans National Museum and
2 Library Fund, to private organizations for the benefit of the
3 Korean War Veterans National Museum and Library.

4 (e) The Department has the power to make grants, from funds
5 appropriated from the Illinois Military Family Relief Fund, for
6 benefits authorized under the Survivors Compensation Act.

7 (Source: P.A. 93-839, eff. 7-30-04; 94-167, eff. 1-1-06.)