

AN ACT concerning military service.

**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 39 as follows:

(20 ILCS 2805/39 new)

Sec. 39. Veterans' Accountability Unit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(h) The Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit may recommend changes to the Director of Veterans' Affairs concerning Department policies or practices based upon information learned or observations made by the Veterans' Accountability Unit staff during the course of its duties. The Director of the Veterans' Accountability Unit shall meet regularly with the Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor to report this information to allow the Office to determine whether further investigation is necessary.

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

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

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