

(PRE-FILED)

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 Assigned to: Health and Government Operations and Ways and Means

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments
 House action: Adopted
 Read second time: March 25, 2005

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Veterans Advocacy and Education Act of 2005**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts
 4 Scholarship; establishing application requirements for participation in the
 5 scholarship; requiring a certain scholarship to supplement certain federal
 6 education benefits; providing that each scholarship may be used for certain
 7 educational expenses; prohibiting the annual amount of a scholarship from
 8 exceeding a certain percentage of the equivalent tuition and certain fees of
 9 certain institutions of higher education; requiring a scholarship recipient to
 10 maintain a certain grade point average; providing for the duration of the
 11 scholarship; requiring funds for the scholarship to be provided in the annual
 12 budget of the Maryland Higher Education Commission; requiring scholarship
 13 recipients to file for certain federal and State financial aid by a certain date;
 14 prohibiting certain scholarships from being awarded after a certain date;
 15 permitting certain scholarships to be renewed after a certain date; authorizing
 16 legislative scholarship funds to be used for certain purposes; establishing a

1 Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship Fund in the
2 Commission; directing the Commission to use certain gifts and grants for the
3 Fund in a certain manner; requiring the Commission to prepare a certain
4 annual report regarding the Fund; ~~renaming the Maryland Veterans~~
5 ~~Commission service centers to be the veterans advocate offices; defining the~~
6 ~~operational and administrative authority of the Department of Veterans Affairs~~
7 ~~and of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; defining the function of certain~~
8 ~~commissions within the Department; altering the composition and length of~~
9 ~~terms of Commission members; repealing obsolete provisions; altering certain~~
10 ~~provisions relating to interment in veterans cemeteries; altering certain~~
11 ~~provisions for admission to a veterans home; establishing a certain Outreach~~
12 ~~and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans Affairs; requiring the~~
13 ~~Secretary of Veterans Affairs to appoint a certain director; providing a salary for~~
14 ~~and the duties of a certain director; requiring the Commission and the~~
15 ~~Department of Veterans Affairs to help Outreach and Advocacy Program to~~
16 ~~make veterans and their dependents receive aware of and access certain~~
17 ~~benefits to which they are entitled under federal, State, and local law;~~
18 ~~authorizing the Director of the Commission to appoint a certain representative,~~
19 ~~if necessary, to actively advocate and promote the interests of certain individuals~~
20 ~~in obtaining certain benefits and entitlements; Secretary to appoint a director~~
21 ~~for a certain program; requiring the Director to develop and implement a certain~~
22 ~~veterans outreach program; authorizing the Director, with the approval of the~~
23 ~~Commission, to enter into certain contracts and work with certain governmental~~
24 ~~units and with certain community-based organizations to provide certain~~
25 ~~information about certain services for veterans; requiring the Director and the~~
26 ~~Commission to develop certain mechanisms for outreach; requiring the~~
27 ~~Department of Veterans Affairs to develop and maintain a certain database;~~
28 ~~requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with certain~~
29 ~~community-based organizations to develop a certain survey; requiring the~~
30 ~~Outreach and Advocacy Program to seek out and track certain veterans and~~
31 ~~provide certain veterans with certain information; requiring the Commission~~
32 ~~Secretary to submit a report on or before a certain date of each year to the~~
33 ~~Governor and General Assembly that includes certain information regarding the~~
34 ~~services of the veterans advocate offices; establishing a Task Force to Study~~
35 ~~State Assistance to Veterans; providing for the composition of the Task Force;~~
36 ~~requiring the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House to jointly~~
37 ~~appoint the chairman of the Task Force; requiring the Department of Legislative~~
38 ~~Services to provide the staffing for the Task Force; prohibiting members of the~~
39 ~~Task Force from receiving compensation but entitling members to~~
40 ~~reimbursement of certain expenses; requiring the Task Force to study and make~~
41 ~~recommendations regarding the providing of State assistance and services to~~
42 ~~veterans of this State; requiring the Task Force to submit a certain report~~
43 ~~reports to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain date;~~
44 ~~making certain technical corrections; providing for the termination of certain~~
45 ~~provisions a certain provision of this Act; and generally relating to education~~
46 ~~and benefits assistance for veterans and veterans' families.~~

47 BY adding to

1 Article - Education
 2 Section 18-604
 3 Annotated Code of Maryland
 4 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2004 Supplement)

5 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
 6 Article - State Government
 7 Section ~~9-911 and 9-912~~ 9-901, 9-904, 9-905, 9-907, 9-908, 9-909, 9-911,
 8 9-912, 9-913, 9-914, 9-915, 9-917, 9-918, 9-919, 9-920, 9-921, 9-922,
 9 9-923, 9-925, and 9-927 through 9-937, inclusive
 10 Annotated Code of Maryland
 11 (2004 Replacement Volume)

12 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
 13 Article - State Government
 14 Section 9-902
 15 Annotated Code of Maryland
 16 (2004 Replacement Volume)

17 BY adding to
 18 Article - State Government
 19 Section ~~9-912, 9-903; 9-939 through 9-942~~ to be under the new part "Part V.
 20 Outreach and Advocacy Program"; and 9-945 to be under the new part
 21 "Part VI. Reporting"
 22 Annotated Code of Maryland
 23 (2004 Replacement Volume)

24 BY repealing
 25 Article - State Government
 26 Section 9-910, 9-924, and 9-926
 27 Annotated Code of Maryland
 28 (2004 Replacement Volume)

29 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
 30 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

31 **Article - Education**

32 18-604.

33 (A) FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION, AN INDIVIDUAL SERVED IN THE
 34 AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT IF THE INDIVIDUAL WAS A MEMBER OF THE
 35 UNIFORM SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES WHO SERVED IN:

1 (1) AFGHANISTAN OR CONTIGUOUS AIR SPACE, AS DEFINED IN
2 FEDERAL REGULATIONS, ON OR AFTER OCTOBER 24, 2001, AND BEFORE A TERMINAL
3 DATE TO BE PRESCRIBED BY THE UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF DEFENSE; OR

4 (2) IRAQ OR CONTIGUOUS WATERS OR AIR SPACE, AS DEFINED IN
5 FEDERAL REGULATIONS, ON OR AFTER MARCH 19, 2003, AND BEFORE A TERMINAL
6 DATE TO BE PRESCRIBED BY THE UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.

7 ~~(A)~~ (B) THERE IS A VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ CONFLICTS
8 SCHOLARSHIP.

9 ~~(B)~~ (C) AN INDIVIDUAL MAY APPLY TO THE OFFICE FOR A SCHOLARSHIP
10 UNDER THIS SECTION IF THE INDIVIDUAL:

11 (1) IS A RESIDENT OF MARYLAND;

12 (2) FOR AN INDIVIDUAL SPECIFIED IN PARAGRAPH (4)(I) OF THIS
13 SUBSECTION, WAS A MARYLAND RESIDENT PRIOR TO SERVING IN, OR BEING
14 ACTIVATED AS A RESULT OF, THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT;

15 ~~(2)~~ (3) (I) IS ACCEPTED FOR ADMISSION OR ENROLLED IN THE
16 REGULAR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM AT AN ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION; OR

17 (II) IS ACCEPTED FOR ADMISSION OR ENROLLED IN A 2-YEAR
18 TERMINAL CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN WHICH THE COURSE WORK IS ACCEPTABLE
19 FOR TRANSFER CREDIT FOR AN ACCREDITED BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM IN AN
20 ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION; AND

21 ~~(3)~~ ~~(I)~~ IS A VETERAN, AS DEFINED UNDER § 9-901 OF THE STATE
22 GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, WHO SERVED IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT; OR

23 ~~(II)~~ IS AT LEAST 16 YEARS OLD AND A SON OR DAUGHTER OF A
24 MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO IS SERVING OR HAS SERVED IN THE
25 AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT.

26 (4) (I) 1. IS A VETERAN, AS DEFINED UNDER § 9-901 OF THE STATE
27 GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, WHO SERVED IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT;

28 2. IS AN ACTIVE DUTY MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES
29 WHO SERVED IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT; OR

30 3. IS A MEMBER OF A RESERVE COMPONENT OF THE ARMED
31 FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES OR THE MARYLAND NATIONAL GUARD WHO WAS
32 ACTIVATED AS A RESULT OF THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT DESCRIBED IN
33 SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION; OR

34 (II) IS A SON, DAUGHTER, OR SPOUSE OF A:

1 1. VETERAN OR ACTIVE DUTY MEMBER OF THE ARMED
2 FORCES WHO IS SERVING OR HAS SERVED IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT;
3 OR

4 2. MEMBER OF THE RESERVE OR MARYLAND NATIONAL
5 GUARD WHO WAS ACTIVATED AS A RESULT OF THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT
6 DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION.

7 ~~(C)~~ (D) A SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL
8 SUPPLEMENT ANY FEDERAL EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR WHICH A RECIPIENT
9 QUALIFIES AS A RESULT OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S MILITARY SERVICE OR STATUS AS A
10 DEPENDENT OF A MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES OR OF A VETERAN OF THE
11 ARMED FORCES.

12 ~~(D)~~ (E) (1) EACH SCHOLARSHIP MAY BE USED, AT ANY ELIGIBLE
13 INSTITUTION, TO PAY FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES AS DEFINED BY THE OFFICE,
14 INCLUDING:

15 (I) TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES; AND

16 (II) ROOM AND BOARD.

17 (2) THE ANNUAL AMOUNT OF A SCHOLARSHIP ~~AT A PRIVATE~~
18 ~~INSTITUTION~~ MAY NOT EXCEED 50% OF THE EQUIVALENT ANNUAL TUITION AND
19 ~~MANDATORY FEES~~ TUITION, MANDATORY FEES, AND ROOM AND BOARD OF A
20 RESIDENT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AT THE 4-YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF
21 HIGHER EDUCATION WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND, OTHER THAN
22 THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY OF
23 MARYLAND, BALTIMORE, WITH THE HIGHEST ANNUAL EXPENSES FOR A FULL-TIME
24 RESIDENT UNDERGRADUATE.

25 ~~(E)~~ (F) A SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT SHALL MAINTAIN A GRADE POINT
26 AVERAGE OF AT LEAST ~~3.0~~ 2.5 ON A 4.0 SCALE.

27 ~~(F)~~ (G) EACH RECIPIENT OF A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THIS SECTION MAY
28 HOLD THE AWARD FOR 5 YEARS OF FULL-TIME STUDY OR 8 YEARS OF PART-TIME
29 STUDY.

30 (H) A SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT SHALL FILE FOR FEDERAL AND STATE
31 FINANCIAL AID BY MARCH 1 OF EACH YEAR.

32 (I) (1) THE OFFICE MAY NOT AWARD AN INITIAL SCHOLARSHIP TO AN
33 INDIVIDUAL SPECIFIED IN SUBSECTION (C)(4) OF THIS SECTION AFTER JUNE 30, 2012.

34 (2) THE OFFICE MAY RENEW A SCHOLARSHIP AFTER JUNE 30, 2012 IF
35 THE INDIVIDUAL RECEIVED AN INITIAL SCHOLARSHIP PRIOR TO THAT DATE.

36 (J) A SENATOR OR DELEGATE MAY AUTHORIZE THE OFFICE TO AWARD ALL
37 OR A PORTION OF THE FUNDS AUTHORIZED UNDER SUBTITLES 4 AND 5 OF THIS
38 TITLE TO ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS OF SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED UNDER THIS SECTION.

1 ~~(G)~~ (K) (1) FUNDS FOR THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ
 2 CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP SHALL BE AS PROVIDED IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET OF THE
 3 COMMISSION BY THE GOVERNOR.

4 (2) (I) THERE IS A VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ
 5 CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN THE COMMISSION.

6 (II) THE COMMISSION:

7 1. MAY ACCEPT ANY GIFT OR GRANT FROM ANY PERSON OR
 8 CORPORATION FOR THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ CONFLICTS
 9 SCHOLARSHIP FUND;

10 2. SHALL USE ANY GIFT OR GRANT THAT IT RECEIVES FOR A
 11 SCHOLARSHIP FROM THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ CONFLICTS
 12 SCHOLARSHIP FUND; AND

13 3. SHALL DEPOSIT ANY GIFT OR GRANT THAT IT RECEIVES
 14 FOR THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP
 15 FUND WITH THE STATE TREASURER IN A NONBUDGETED ACCOUNT.

16 (3) (I) AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR, THE COMMISSION SHALL
 17 PREPARE AN ANNUAL REPORT ON THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ
 18 CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND THAT INCLUDES AN ACCOUNTING OF ALL
 19 FINANCIAL RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES TO AND FROM THE FUND.

20 (II) THE COMMISSION SHALL SUBMIT A COPY OF THE REPORT TO
 21 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AS PROVIDED UNDER § 2-1246 OF THE STATE
 22 GOVERNMENT ARTICLE.

23 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland
 24 read as follows:

25 **Article - State Government**

26 ~~9-911.~~

27 (a) ~~The Commission shall have a [service center] VETERANS ADVOCATE~~
 28 ~~OFFICE in Baltimore City, which shall be the principal office of the Commission.~~

29 (b) ~~(1) The Commission may:~~

30 ~~(i) have any additional [service centers] VETERANS ADVOCATE~~
 31 ~~OFFICES that the Commission considers necessary or advisable to facilitate and~~
 32 ~~expedite the servicing of claims of veterans and dependents; and~~

33 ~~(ii) close any additional [service center] VETERANS ADVOCATE~~
 34 ~~OFFICE that the Commission no longer considers necessary.~~

1 (2) The Commission shall try to locate each additional [service center]
2 ~~VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICE:~~

3 (i) centrally in the area to be served so that the greatest number of
4 veterans:

5 1. have access with the least possible delay, travel, and
6 inconvenience; and

7 2. receive, as far as possible, personal attention; and

8 (ii) in space that is provided rent free.

9 (e) The Commission and the Department shall coordinate, as much as
10 possible, with other appropriate units to:

11 (1) avoid an overlap of effort; and

12 (2) provide, if possible, at 1 [service center] ~~VETERANS ADVOCATE~~
13 ~~OFFICE~~ or in 1 general local area, complete information about the problems that
14 relate to veterans.

15 (d) The Director shall supervise the [service centers] ~~VETERANS ADVOCATE~~
16 ~~OFFICES.~~

17 ~~9-912.~~

18 (a) ~~{(1)}~~ The Commission and the Department shall help veterans and their
19 dependents to receive promptly and regularly all of the benefits to which veterans or
20 dependents are entitled under federal, STATE, AND LOCAL law.

21 ~~(B)~~ (1) ~~THE DIRECTOR MAY, IF NECESSARY, APPOINT A REPRESENTATIVE OF~~
22 ~~THE VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICE TO ACTIVELY ADVOCATE AND PROMOTE THE~~
23 ~~INTERESTS OF A VETERAN, A VETERAN'S DEPENDENT, OR A VETERAN'S SURVIVOR IN~~
24 ~~OBTAINING FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL BENEFITS AND ANY OTHER~~
25 ~~ENTITLEMENTS GRANTED BY LAW.~~

26 (2) Among other things, the Commission and the Department shall
27 ~~ACTIVELY~~ help veterans and their dependents in:

28 (i) preparing, in proper form, claims for benefits;

29 (ii) presenting the claims to the appropriate governmental unit;

30 (iii) trying to prevent and to relieve congestion in the processing of
31 the claims; and

32 (iv) obtaining and expediting action on the claims.

33 ~~{(b)}~~ (3) The Director ~~OR THE APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE~~
34 ~~VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICE~~ shall keep in contact with the appropriate

1 governmental unit as to the status of each claim of a veteran, [or dependent of a
2 veteran] ~~A VETERAN'S DEPENDENT, OR A VETERAN'S SURVIVOR.~~

3 (C) (1) ~~FOR THE PURPOSES OF REACHING ANY VETERAN, VETERAN'S
4 DEPENDENT, OR VETERAN'S SURVIVOR IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING
5 ENTITLEMENTS GRANTED BY LAW, THE DIRECTOR SHALL DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT
6 A VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM.~~

7 (2) ~~AS APPROPRIATE TO CARRY OUT THE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES
8 UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE DIRECTOR, WITH THE APPROVAL
9 OF THE COMMISSION, MAY ENTER INTO CONTRACTS WITH COMMUNITY BASED
10 ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY
11 THE VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICE TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE.~~

12 (3) ~~THE DIRECTOR AND THE COMMISSION SHALL DEVELOP
13 MECHANISMS FOR OUTREACH INCLUDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PAMPHLET
14 DESCRIBING THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICE TO BE
15 DISSEMINATED BY DIRECT MAIL AND THROUGH COMMUNITY BASED VETERANS
16 ORGANIZATIONS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, THE DEPARTMENT OF
17 HUMAN RESOURCES, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE,
18 AND ANY OTHER APPROPRIATE STATE AGENCY OR UNIT THE DIRECTOR AND
19 COMMISSION CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE.~~

20 **Subtitle 9. Department of Veterans Affairs.**

21 **Part I. Established.**

22 9-901.

23 (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

24 (b) "Department" means the Department of Veterans Affairs.

25 (c) "Secretary" means the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

26 (d) Except as otherwise provided in §§ [9-913 and 9-914] 9-906 AND 9-907
27 of this subtitle, "veteran" means an individual who served on active duty in the armed
28 forces of the United States, other than for training, and was discharged or released
29 under conditions other than dishonorable.

30 9-902.

31 (a) There is a Department of Veterans Affairs, established as a principal
32 department of the State government.

33 (b) The head of the Department is the Secretary of Veterans Affairs who shall
34 be:

35 (1) a veteran who has an honorable discharge from active service with a
36 uniformed service of the United States; and

1 (2) appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

2 (c) (1) The Secretary serves at the pleasure of the Governor and is
 3 responsible directly to the Governor. The Secretary shall advise the Governor on all
 4 matters assigned to the Department and is responsible for carrying out the
 5 Governor's policies on these matters.

6 (2) The Secretary is responsible for the operation of the Department and
 7 shall establish guidelines and procedures to promote the orderly and efficient
 8 operation of the Department.

9 (3) Subject to the provisions of this subtitle, the Secretary may establish,
 10 reorganize, or consolidate areas of responsibility in the Department as necessary to
 11 fulfill the duties assigned by the Secretary.

12 (4) The Secretary shall adopt regulations necessary to carry out the
 13 provisions of this subtitle.

14 (d) The Secretary is entitled to the salary provided in the State budget.

15 9-903.

16 THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IS THE LEGAL ADVISER TO THE DEPARTMENT.

17 [9-911.] 9-904.

18 (a) [The Commission shall have a service center in Baltimore City, which
 19 shall be the principal office of the Commission.]

20 [(b)] (1) The [Commission] DEPARTMENT may:

21 (i) [have any additional] ESTABLISH service centers that the
 22 [Commission] DEPARTMENT considers necessary or advisable to facilitate and
 23 expedite the servicing of claims of veterans and dependents; and

24 (ii) close any [additional] service center that the [Commission]
 25 DEPARTMENT no longer considers necessary.

26 (2) The [Commission] DEPARTMENT shall try to locate each
 27 [additional] service center CENTRALLY IN THE AREA TO BE SERVED SO THAT THE
 28 GREATEST NUMBER OF VETERANS:

29 [(i)] centrally in the area to be served so that the greatest number of
 30 veterans:]

31 [1.] (I) have access with the least possible delay, travel, and
 32 inconvenience; and

33 [2.] (II) receive, as far as possible, personal attention[; and

34 (ii) in space that is provided rent-free].

1 [(c) The Commission and the Department shall coordinate, as much as
2 possible, with other appropriate units to:

3 (1) avoid an overlap of effort; and

4 (2) provide, if possible, at 1 service center or in 1 general local area,
5 complete information about the problems that relate to veterans.]

6 [(d) (B) [The Director shall supervise the service centers.] THERE SHALL BE
7 A DIRECTOR OF VETERANS SERVICE CENTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUPERVISION
8 OF VETERANS SERVICE CENTERS, WHOSE DUTIES SHALL INCLUDE MAINTAINING
9 CONTACT WITH THE APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT REGARDING THE STATUS
10 OF EACH CLAIM OF A VETERAN OR ELIGIBLE DEPENDENT OF A VETERAN.

11 [9-912.] 9-905.

12 [(a) (1)] The [Commission and the] Department shall:

13 (1) help veterans and their dependents to receive promptly and regularly
14 all of the benefits to which veterans or dependents are entitled under federal law[.];
15 AND

16 (2) [Among other things, the Commission and the Department shall]
17 help veterans and their dependents in:

18 (i) preparing, in proper form, claims for benefits;

19 (ii) presenting the claims to the appropriate governmental unit;

20 (iii) trying to prevent and to relieve congestion in the processing of
21 the claims; and

22 (iv) obtaining and expediting action on the claims.

23 [(b) The Director shall keep in contact with the appropriate governmental unit
24 as to the status of each claim of a veteran or dependent of a veteran.]

25 [9-913.] 9-906.

26 (a) (1) In this section, "State veterans' cemetery" means a cemetery that the
27 [Commission] DEPARTMENT establishes under this section.

28 (2) In this section and in § [9-914] 9-907 of this subtitle, "veteran"
29 means an individual who:

30 (i) served HONORABLY on active duty in the armed forces of the
31 United States; or

32 (ii) served HONORABLY as a member of the State militia ordered
33 into active service of the United States by order of the President and was killed in the
34 line of duty.

1 (b) The [Commission] DEPARTMENT may establish [1] ONE or more
2 cemeteries in the State for the burial of veterans and [their immediate families]
3 ELIGIBLE SPOUSES OR DEPENDENTS AS AUTHORIZED BY THE SECRETARY.

4 (c) [(1)] The [Commission] DEPARTMENT may accept land, on behalf of the
5 State or a political subdivision of the State, or otherwise acquire land for a State
6 veterans' cemetery, if the [Commission] DEPARTMENT has the approval of:

7 [(i)] (1) the governing body of the county where the State veterans'
8 cemetery is to be located;

9 [(ii)] (2) the delegation in the General Assembly for the county
10 where the State veterans' cemetery is to be located; and

11 [(iii)] (3) the Board of Public Works.

12 [(2)] In selecting a location for a proposed State veterans' cemetery, the
13 Commission shall give priority to land that is near a national memorial battle site.]

14 (d) (1) The [Commission] DEPARTMENT shall maintain and supervise each
15 State veterans' cemetery.

16 (2) The Washington Cemetery Board of Trustees shall be under the
17 supervision of the [Commission] DEPARTMENT.

18 (e) [(1)] Subject to the limitations in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the
19 THE [Commission] DEPARTMENT shall provide a plot in a State veterans' cemetery,
20 without charge, to [an applicant] A VETERAN who meets the requirements of this
21 section.

22 [(2)] In the order in which the Commission receives the applications for
23 plots, the Commission shall allot a plot in the State veterans' cemetery that is closest
24 to the residence of the veteran and has an available plot.]

25 (f) [(1)] To qualify for a plot in a State veterans' cemetery[.]:

26 (1) the applicant must be a veteran WHO MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS
27 FOR BURIAL AT A NATIONAL VETERANS CEMETERY or [a member of the immediate
28 family] AN ELIGIBLE SPOUSE OR DEPENDENT of a veteran who meets the
29 requirements of this subsection[.]; AND

30 [(2)] The veteran must have an honorable discharge from the armed
31 forces.]

32 [(3)] (2) [The] IF A VETERAN, THE veteran must ALSO have been a
33 resident of the State:

34 (i) when the veteran entered the armed forces;

35 (ii) when the veteran died; or

1 (iii) for [20] 2 years, unless, for a reason that the [Commission]
2 DEPARTMENT finds compelling, the [Commission] DEPARTMENT waives the time
3 period.

4 (g) To obtain a plot in a State veterans' cemetery, an applicant shall submit to
5 the [Commission] DEPARTMENT an application on the form that the [Commission]
6 DEPARTMENT provides.

7 (h) (1) In a plot that is allotted to a veteran, the [Commission]
8 DEPARTMENT shall bury:

9 (i) the veteran; and

10 (ii) any member of the immediate family WHO IS AN ELIGIBLE
11 SPOUSE OR DEPENDENT of the veteran if the family member can be buried in a space
12 above or below the veteran OR IN THE NEXT AVAILABLE PLOT.

13 (2) (i) With each plot, the [Commission] DEPARTMENT shall provide
14 [1] ONE grave liner [not to exceed \$100 in cost, subject to an annual increase of not
15 more than 5 percent to allow for inflation].

16 (ii) For an eligible veteran, the [Commission] DEPARTMENT shall
17 pay for the grave liner.

18 (iii) For an eligible [family member] SPOUSE OR DEPENDENT, the
19 grave liner shall be paid for by the family or estate.

20 (i) (1) The [Commission] DEPARTMENT shall bury the veteran without
21 charge.

22 (2) For burial of a member of the immediate family WHO IS AN ELIGIBLE
23 SPOUSE OR DEPENDENT, the [Commission] DEPARTMENT may set a fee that does
24 not exceed the cost of burial.

25 [9-914.] 9-907.

26 The [Commission] DEPARTMENT shall keep a registry of the graves of veterans
27 AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS who are buried in the State VETERANS
28 CEMETERIES.

29 [9-915.] 9-908.

30 (a) In this section, "veterans' memorials and monuments" means:

31 (1) the Maryland Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Associated Land as
32 established pursuant to Joint Resolution No. 22 of 1983;

33 (2) the Maryland Korean War Memorial and Associated Land as
34 established pursuant to Joint Resolution No. 3 of 1985; and

35 (3) the Maryland World War II Memorial and Associated Land.

1 (b) There is a Veterans' Memorials and Monuments Program administered by
2 the [Maryland Veterans Commission] DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

3 (c) The purpose of the Program is to provide for the operation, maintenance,
4 security, and preservation of veterans' memorials and monuments.

5 (d) In furtherance of these purposes, the [Commission] DEPARTMENT may, as
6 provided for in the budget:

7 (1) lease land on behalf of the State or a political subdivision of the State;
8 or

9 (2) acquire land that has been improved by construction of a memorial or
10 monument.

11 (e) The Secretary may adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of this
12 section.

13 (f) (1) The [Commission] DEPARTMENT shall, as provided for in the
14 budget, provide for the management of the veterans' memorials and monuments as
15 provided in this section.

16 (2) The [Commission] DEPARTMENT may delegate any of its powers and
17 duties under this section to a special commission or board created by the
18 [Commission] DEPARTMENT and approved by the Governor.

19 (g) The [Commission] DEPARTMENT may acquire, hold, use, and improve
20 property for the purposes specified in subsection (c) of this section.

21 (h) Subject to Title 7 of the State Finance and Procurement Article, the
22 [Commission] DEPARTMENT may:

23 (1) accept gifts or grants;

24 (2) unless otherwise provided, spend the principal and income of a gift or
25 grant; and

26 (3) invest all or part of the principal income in general obligations of the
27 State or any other security.

28 [9-917.] 9-909.

29 [In this Part III of this subtitle.] IN §§ 9-910 THROUGH 9-912 OF THIS SUBTITLE,
30 "Home" means the home OR HOMES for veterans that the [Maryland Veterans' Home
31 Commission] DEPARTMENT supervises.

32 [9-927.] 9-910.

33 (a) The [Veterans' Home Commission] DEPARTMENT shall:

1 (1) maintain and supervise generally the Home in accordance with [this
2 Part III of] this subtitle; and

3 (2) adopt any regulation that is needed for management of the Home,
4 including regulations for admission, maintenance, and discharge of its residents.

5 (b) (1) The [Veterans' Home Commission] DEPARTMENT may appoint a
6 [Commandant] DIRECTOR for the Home and employ any other staff that is needed to
7 manage the Home properly.

8 (2) In appointing or employing staff, the [Veterans' Home Commission]
9 DEPARTMENT shall give preference to a veteran who has an honorable discharge from
10 the armed forces.

11 [(3) The Veterans' Home Commission shall set the salary for each official
12 of the Home in an amount that does not exceed the salary paid by similar institutions
13 for the service.]

14 [(4)] (3) The [Commandant] DIRECTOR shall:

15 (i) serve at the pleasure of the [Veterans' Home Commission]
16 SECRETARY; and

17 (ii) perform any duty that the [Veterans' Home Commission]
18 DEPARTMENT requires.

19 [(5) If the Veterans' Home Commission delegates to the Commandant
20 responsibility for employing staff, the Commission shall hold the Commandant
21 strictly accountable for the actions of each individual whom the Commandant
22 employs.]

23 [9-928.] 9-911.

24 (a) In accordance with the regulations of the [Veterans' Home Commission]
25 DEPARTMENT and applicable law, the Home shall be open [to a veteran who]:

26 (1) TO A VETERAN WHO:

27 [(1)] (I) has an honorable discharge from the armed forces; and

28 [(2)] (II) is a resident of the State; OR

29 (2) TO A SPOUSE OF AN ELIGIBLE VETERAN.

30 (b) (1) The [Veterans' Home Commission] DEPARTMENT may charge an
31 individual a reasonable fee for residence in the Home.

32 (2) The [Veterans' Home Commission] DEPARTMENT shall set the fee in
33 accordance with the ability of an individual to pay. However, the fee may not exceed
34 the cost of maintaining the resident in the Home and shall allow the resident enough
35 money for necessary and incidental expenses.

1 (c) A resident may be discharged in accordance with the regulations of the
2 [Veterans' Home Commission] DEPARTMENT and applicable law.

3 [9-929.] 9-912.

4 (a) To carry out the [purposes] RESPONSIBILITIES and goals of the [Veterans'
5 Home Commission] DEPARTMENT CONCERNING THE HOME, the [Commission]
6 DEPARTMENT may acquire, hold, use, improve, and convey property.

7 (b) In addition to any other power under this section AND SUBJECT TO TITLE
8 7 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE, to carry out the purposes or
9 goals of the [Veterans' Home Commission] DEPARTMENT, the [Commission] HOME:

10 (1) may accept a gift or grant; and

11 (2) unless the terms of a gift or grant require otherwise, [on an
12 affirmative vote of at least 7 members of the Commission] AND SUBJECT TO THE
13 APPROVAL OF THE SECRETARY, may:

14 (i) spend the principal and income of the gift or grant; or

15 (ii) invest all or part of the principal and income in:

16 1. general obligations of the State; or

17 2. any other security.

18 (c) (1) In addition to any other power under this section, the [Veterans'
19 Home Commission] DEPARTMENT may lease any part of [its] THE HOME property
20 for use as a concession or other commercial purpose that is consistent with the
21 purposes of the [Commission] DEPARTMENT. However, the [Commission]
22 DEPARTMENT may not lease its property merely for investment purposes.

23 (2) Notwithstanding any other law, unless the lease expressly provides
24 for redemption by the tenant, the lease is not subject to redemption.

25 9-913. RESERVED.

26 Part II. Maryland Veterans Commission.

27 [9-904.] 9-914.

28 (a) In this Part II of this subtitle the following words have the meanings
29 indicated.

30 (b) "Commission" means the Maryland Veterans Commission.

31 [(c) "Director" means the Director of the Maryland Veterans Commission.]

1 [9-905.]9-915.

2 There is a Maryland Veterans Commission in the Department THAT SHALL
 3 ADVISE THE SECRETARY OF ALL MATTERS PERTAINING TO VETERANS ISSUES.

4 [9-907.]9-916.

5 (a) (1) The Commission consists of the following [30] members[:

6 (i) as an ex officio member, the Chairman of the Maryland
 7 Veterans' Home Commission; and

8 (ii) 29 members] appointed by the Governor.

9 (2) Of the [29 appointed] members:

10 (i) [1] ONE shall be appointed from each of the 8 congressional
 11 districts in the State;

12 (ii) [1] ONE shall be a veteran [of World War II.] appointed from
 13 the State at large;

14 (iii) [1] ONE shall be a representative of a women veterans
 15 organization in the State;

16 (IV) ONE SHALL BE A REPRESENTATIVE OF A RETIRED ENLISTED
 17 ORGANIZATION; AND

18 [(iv)] (V) [1] ONE shall be appointed from a list of individuals
 19 submitted to the Governor by each of the following organizations:

20 1. the American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc.;

21 2. the American Legion;

22 3. the Amvets;

23 4. the Catholic War Veterans;

24 5. the Disabled American Veterans;

25 6. the Fleet Reserve Association;

26 7. the Jewish War Veterans;

27 8. the Marine Corps League;

28 9. the Maryland [Retired Officers Association] MILITARY
 29 OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA;

30 10. the Military Order of the Purple Heart;

- 1 11. the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association;
 2 12. the Polish Legion of American Veterans;
 3 13. the Veterans of Foreign Wars;
 4 14. the Vietnam Veterans of America;
 5 15. the Korean War Veterans Association, Inc.; AND
 6 16. the Black Veterans of All Wars, Inc.[:
 7 17. the Maryland Coalition of the Retired Enlisted
 8 Association; and
 9 18. the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge; and
 10 (v) 1 shall be a veteran of the Persian Gulf War appointed from the
 11 State at large.]

12 (b) Each member must be a resident of the State and a veteran [whose final
 13 separation from active service with a uniformed service of the United States was
 14 under honorable conditions].

15 (c) (1) The term of an appointed member is [7] 5 years.

16 (2) The terms of the appointed members are staggered as required by the
 17 terms provided for members of the Commission on October 1, 1984.

18 (3) At the end of a term, a member continues to serve until a successor is
 19 appointed and qualifies.

20 (4) A member who is appointed after a term has begun serves only for
 21 the rest of the term and until a successor is appointed and qualifies.

22 (5) WHEN AN ORGANIZATION IS NO LONGER A PART OF THE
 23 COMMISSION, THE APPOINTMENT SHALL TERMINATE AT THE END OF THE CURRENT
 24 MEMBER'S TERM.

25 (6) A NEW ORGANIZATION MAY NOT BE APPROVED BY THE GENERAL
 26 ASSEMBLY UNLESS IT IS CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED.

27 [9-908.]9-917.

28 (A) From among the members of the Commission, the Governor shall appoint
 29 a chairman.

30 (B) A VICE CHAIRMAN SHALL BE ELECTED BY A SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE OF
 31 THE COMMISSION.

1 [9-909.]9-918.

2 (a) The Commission shall determine the times and places of its meetings.

3 (b) A member of the Commission:

4 (1) may not receive compensation; but

5 (2) if the Commission approves, is entitled to reimbursement for
6 expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State
7 budget.

8 (c) The Department shall provide staff support to the Commission in
9 accordance with the State budget.

10 [9-910.

11 (a) The Secretary, with the Commission's approval, shall appoint a Director
12 for the Commission.

13 (b) The Director is entitled to the salary provided in the State budget.

14 (c) In addition to any duties set forth elsewhere, the Director shall:

15 (1) survey the State to ensure that veterans and their dependents are
16 not neglected; and

17 (2) perform any other duty that the Commission directs.]

18 9-919. RESERVED.

19 9-920. RESERVED.

20 Part III. Maryland Veterans' Home Commission.

21 [9-920.] 9-921.

22 There is a Maryland Veterans' Home Commission in the Department.

23 [9-918.] 9-922.

24 (a) The [purposes] PURPOSE of the Maryland Veterans' Home Commission IS
25 TO ADVISE THE DEPARTMENT OF ISSUES RELATED TO STATE VETERANS HOMES [are
26 to operate and to manage in the State a home for veterans].

27 (b) The General Assembly declares the [purposes] PURPOSE of the Maryland
28 Veterans' Home Commission to be of general benefit to the veterans of the State.

1 [9-919.19-923.

2 This Part III of this subtitle does not limit any power or activity of:

3 (1) a unit of the State government;

4 (2) a political subdivision of the State; or

5 (3) any person who is interested in veterans in the State.

6 [9-921.19-924.

7 (a) The Veterans' Home Commission consists of the following [15] 14
8 members:

9 (1) 11 individuals appointed by the Governor with the advice and
10 consent of the Senate; and

11 (2) as ex officio members:

12 (i) the Governor;

13 (ii) the President of the Senate; AND

14 (iii) the Speaker of the House of Delegates]; and

15 (iv) the Chairman of the Maryland Veterans Commission].

16 (b) (1) The term of an appointed member is [4] 5 years.

17 (2) The terms of the appointed members are staggered as required by the
18 terms provided for members of the Veterans' Home Commission on October 1, 1984.

19 (3) At the end of a term, a member continues to serve until a successor is
20 appointed and qualifies.

21 (4) A member who is appointed after a term has begun serves only for
22 the rest of the term and until a successor is appointed and qualifies.

23 (c) As far as is practicable and is consistent with the purposes and goals of the
24 Veterans' Home Commission, the Governor shall choose appointed members so as to
25 have a broad distribution from among:

26 (1) veterans and veterans' [groups] ORGANIZATIONS; and

27 (2) the geographical areas of the State.

1 [9-922.] 9-925.

2 (a) From among its members, the Veterans' Home Commission shall elect a
3 chairman, a secretary, and any other officers that the Commission considers
4 appropriate.

5 (b) The manner of election of officers and their terms of office shall be as the
6 Veterans' Home Commission determines.

7 [9-923.] 9-926.

8 (a) Seven members of the Veterans' Home Commission are a quorum to do
9 business.

10 (b) (1) The Veterans' Home Commission shall meet:

11 (i) at least twice a year, at the times and places that it determines;
12 and

13 (ii) at the call of the Chairman, on the Chairman's initiative or on
14 the request of at least 4 members.

15 (2) Unless all of the members of the Veterans' Home Commission agree
16 otherwise, the secretary of the Commission shall give each member at least 7 days'
17 written notice of a meeting.

18 (3) If the President is unable to attend a meeting, the President may
19 designate a Senator or an employee of the General Assembly to represent the
20 President at the meeting.

21 (4) If the Speaker is unable to attend a meeting, the Speaker may
22 designate a Delegate or an employee of the General Assembly to represent the
23 Speaker at the meeting.

24 (5) If the Governor is unable to attend a meeting, the Governor may
25 designate another individual to represent the Governor at the meeting.

26 (c) A member of the Veterans' Home Commission:

27 (1) may not receive compensation[.]; but

28 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State
29 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

30 [9-924.

31 The Attorney General is the legal adviser to the Veterans' Home Commission.]

1 [9-925.]9-927.

2 (A) WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE SECRETARY, THE VETERANS' HOME
3 COMMISSION MAY ADOPT PROCEDURES TO:

4 (1) GOVERN ITSELF; AND

5 (2) CARRY OUT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VETERANS' HOME
6 COMMISSION.

7 (B) THE COMMISSION:

8 (1) MAY NOT INCUR ANY EXPENSES WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE
9 DEPARTMENT; AND

10 (2) AT EACH REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OR MORE OFTEN
11 AS IT DIRECTS, SHALL SUBMIT TO THE DEPARTMENT A REPORT ON ANY ACTION
12 THAT THE COMMITTEE HAS TAKEN SINCE ITS LAST REPORT.

13 [(a)] (C) (1) The Veterans' Home Commission shall through the Department
14 submit an annual report[:

15 (i) to the Governor; and

16 (ii) subject to § 2-1246 of this article, to the General Assembly.

17 (2) The annual report shall:

18 (i) describe the activities of the Commission; and

19 (ii) include any recommendations for furthering the purposes of the
20 Commission] IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 9-945 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

21 [(b)] (D) As far as practicable, the Veterans' Home Commission shall cooperate
22 with persons and public agencies to carry out the purposes and goals of the
23 Commission AND DEPARTMENT.

24 [9-926.

25 (a) The Veterans' Home Commission may with the approval of the Secretary
26 adopt regulations to:

27 (1) govern itself; and

28 (2) carry out the purposes and goals of the Commission.

29 (b) (1) The Veterans' Home Commission may take any necessary and proper
30 action to carry out a specific power under this Part III of this subtitle.

31 (2) Subject to the legislative purposes of this Part III of this subtitle, the
32 Veterans' Home Commission may make contracts and other legal agreements.

1 (c) (1) The Veterans' Home Commission may delegate any of its powers to a
2 committee of 1 or more of its members or to the Commandant of the Home.

3 (2) If the Veterans' Home Commission delegates any power to a
4 committee of its members, the committee:

5 (i) may not incur any expenses without the consent of the
6 Commission; and

7 (ii) at each regular meeting of the Commission or more often as it
8 directs, shall submit to the Commission a report on any action that the committee has
9 taken since its last report.]

10 [9-930.] 9-928.

11 The State is not obligated to provide capital or operating funds for the Veterans'
12 Home Commission but may appropriate money for the purposes and goals of the
13 Commission.

14 9-929. RESERVED.

15 Part IV. War Memorial Commission.

16 [9-931.] 9-930.

17 In this Part IV of this subtitle, "Commission" means the War Memorial
18 Commission.

19 [9-932.] 9-931.

20 There is a War Memorial Commission in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

21 [9-933.] 9-932.

22 (a) (1) The Commission consists of 10 members.

23 (2) Of the 10 Commission members:

24 (i) 5 shall be appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, with
25 the approval of the Governor; and

26 (ii) 5 shall be appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore City.

27 (b) Each member must be a Maryland war veteran.

28 (c) (1) The term of a member is 5 years.

29 (2) The terms of a member are staggered as required by the terms
30 provided for members of the Commission on October 1, 1984.

1 (3) At the end of a term, a member continues to serve until a successor is
2 appointed and qualifies.

3 (4) A member who is appointed after a term has begun serves only for
4 the rest of the term and until a successor is appointed and qualifies.

5 [9-934.] 9-933.

6 (a) From among its members, the Commission may elect:

7 (1) a chairman;

8 (2) a vice chairman; and

9 (3) a secretary and a treasurer or a secretary-treasurer.

10 (b) The manner of election of officers and their terms of office shall be as the
11 Commission determines.

12 [9-935.] 9-934.

13 (a) A member of the Commission may not receive compensation.

14 (b) If the Commission approves the reimbursement and records the vote in the
15 minutes, a member is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard
16 State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

17 [9-936.] 9-935.

18 The State and Baltimore City jointly shall hold title to the War Memorial
19 Building and the memorial site.

20 [9-937.] 9-936.

21 (a) The Commission may provide for management of the War Memorial
22 Building as provided in this section.

23 (b) (1) The Commission shall adopt regulations that provide for the
24 management of the War Memorial Building in a manner that:

25 (i) permits the greatest possible use of the building by the people of
26 the State and by patriotic organizations in the State; and

27 (ii) to the extent possible, permits the use by the patriotic
28 organizations without cost.

29 (2) The Commission shall enforce the regulations.

30 (c) The Commission may appoint a custodian and a janitor for the War
31 Memorial Building.

1 (d) The Commission may use, for the maintenance and administration of the
2 building, any funds that the General Assembly or the Mayor and City Council of
3 Baltimore appropriate for those purposes.

4 9-937. RESERVED.

5 9-938. RESERVED.

6 PART V. OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM.

7 9-939.

8 (A) THERE IS AN OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT.

9 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO ENSURE THAT:

10 (1) VETERANS ARE INFORMED OF THE SERVICES, BENEFITS, AND
11 ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO THEM FROM THE STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT;
12 AND

13 (2) GENERAL ISSUES RELATED TO VETERANS NEEDS ARE BROUGHT TO
14 THE ATTENTION OF THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ORDER FOR
15 THEM TO BE ADDRESSED.

16 9-940.

17 (A) THE SECRETARY SHALL APPOINT A DIRECTOR FOR THE PROGRAM.

18 (B) THE DIRECTOR IS ENTITLED TO THE SALARY PROVIDED IN THE STATE
19 BUDGET.

20 (C) THE DIRECTOR SHALL ADMINISTER AND COORDINATE THE OUTREACH
21 AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM.

22 9-941.

23 (A) THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM SHALL ACTIVELY HELP
24 VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS TO BECOME AWARE OF AND ACCESS ANY
25 SERVICE OR BENEFIT TO WHICH THEY ARE ENTITLED INCLUDING:

26 (1) TAX BENEFITS;

27 (2) HEALTH CARE BENEFITS;

28 (3) DISABILITY BENEFITS;

29 (4) PENSION BENEFITS; AND

30 (5) EDUCATION.

31 (B) THE DIRECTOR OF THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM SHALL:

1 (1) SUPPORT VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS THROUGH THE
2 SERVICE OR BENEFIT PROCESS; AND

3 (2) KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT
4 AS TO THE STATUS OF EACH CLAIM OF A VETERAN, A VETERAN'S DEPENDENT, OR A
5 VETERAN'S SURVIVOR.

6 9-942.

7 (A) (1) FOR THE PURPOSES OF REACHING ANY VETERAN, VETERAN'S
8 DEPENDENT, OR VETERAN'S SURVIVOR IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING
9 SERVICES OR BENEFITS GRANTED BY THE LAW, THE DIRECTOR SHALL DEVELOP AND
10 IMPLEMENT AN OUTREACH PROGRAM.

11 (2) AS APPROPRIATE TO CARRY OUT THE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES
12 UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE DIRECTOR MAY:

13 (I) ENTER INTO CONTRACTS; AND

14 (II) WORK WITH GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AND COMMUNITY-BASED
15 ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE,
16 THE DEPARTMENT OF AGING, FAITH-BASED GROUPS, VETERANS GROUPS, SENIOR
17 CENTERS, ADULT DAY CARE CENTERS, INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AND
18 OTHER ENTITIES THE DIRECTOR CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE.

19 (B) (1) THE DIRECTOR SHALL DEVELOP MECHANISMS FOR OUTREACH TO
20 BE DISSEMINATED BY DIRECT MAIL AND THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED VETERANS
21 ORGANIZATIONS, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, THE DEPARTMENT OF
22 HUMAN RESOURCES, THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE, AND
23 ANY OTHER APPROPRIATE STATE AGENCY OR UNIT THE DIRECTOR CONSIDERS
24 APPROPRIATE.

25 (2) THE MECHANISMS FOR OUTREACH SHALL INCLUDE:

26 (I) THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PAMPHLET DESCRIBING THE
27 SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM;

28 (II) A REGULAR NEWSLETTER;

29 (III) BROCHURES DESCRIBING VARIOUS BENEFITS OR ANY OTHER
30 ISSUE OR BENEFIT OF INTEREST TO VETERANS OR THEIR DEPENDENTS; AND

31 (IV) OTHER MECHANISMS THE DIRECTOR CONSIDERS
32 APPROPRIATE.

33 (C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A DATABASE OF
34 VETERANS IN THE STATE.

35 (D) THE DEPARTMENT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE TYPES OF
36 COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS LISTED IN SUBSECTION (A)(2) OF THIS

1 SECTION, SHALL DEVELOP A SURVEY TO ASSIST IN IDENTIFYING VETERANS AND
 2 DEPENDENTS WHO MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR PENSIONS PROGRAMS.

3 (E) THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM SHALL:

4 (1) IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AND
 5 COMMUNITY-BASED GROUPS, SEEK OUT VETERANS AND THEIR DEPENDENTS WHO
 6 MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR PENSION PROGRAM BENEFITS; AND

7 (2) PROVIDE WOUNDED OR DISABLED VETERANS WITH INFORMATION
 8 ON THE SERVICES AND BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO THEM AND SUPPORT THEM
 9 THROUGH THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING THESE SERVICES AND BENEFITS.

10 9-943. RESERVED.

11 9-944. RESERVED.

12 PART VI. REPORTING.

13 ~~9-912.1.~~ 9-945.

14 ~~THE COMMISSION~~ SECRETARY SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT BY DECEMBER 31 OF
 15 EACH YEAR TO THE GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1246 OF THE STATE
 16 GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THAT INCLUDES:

17 (1) THE NUMBER OF:

18 (I) REQUESTS FOR HELP IN OBTAINING BENEFITS RECEIVED; AND

19 (II) VETERANS, VETERANS' DEPENDENTS, AND VETERANS'
 20 SURVIVORS HELPED BY THE ~~VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICE AND EACH OF THE~~
 21 ~~VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICES~~ OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM, BY
 22 CATEGORY;

23 (2) THE BENEFITS THE ~~VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICE~~ OUTREACH AND
 24 ADVOCACY PROGRAM HELPED TO OBTAIN, BY CATEGORY;

25 (3) THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME IT TAKES TO PROCESS BENEFIT
 26 REQUESTS AND FOR A RECIPIENT TO ACCESS HEALTH BENEFITS;

27 (4) THE AVERAGE AMOUNT OF DISABILITY AND PENSION BENEFITS
 28 RECEIVED BY QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS IN THIS STATE COMPARED TO INDIVIDUALS
 29 IN OTHER STATES;

30 ~~(3)~~ (5) A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ~~COMMISSION'S VETERANS~~
 31 ~~ADVOCATE OFFICE~~ OUTREACH PROGRAM IN THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY
 32 PROGRAM;

1 (4) ~~THE NUMBER OF ADVOCATE OFFICES IN OPERATION, THEIR~~
 2 ~~LOCATION, AND THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF STAFF REQUIRED TO OPERATE EACH~~
 3 ~~ADVOCATE OFFICE; AND~~

4 ~~(5)~~ (6) AN ACCOUNT OF THE COSTS OF OPERATING THE ~~VETERANS~~
 5 ~~ADVOCATE OFFICE AND VETERANS ADVOCATE OFFICES~~ OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY
 6 PROGRAM;

7 (7) A STATUS REPORT INCLUDING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR,
 8 EFFICACY OF, EFFICIENCY OF, AND LEVEL OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR EACH OF
 9 THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:

10 (I) CEMETERY;

11 (II) MEMORIAL;

12 (III) SERVICE;

13 (IV) VETERANS HOMES; AND

14 (V) OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY;

15 (8) A GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF VETERANS IN THE
 16 STATE;

17 (9) THE ESTIMATED IMPACT CURRENT MILITARY OPERATIONS ARE
 18 LIKELY TO HAVE ON THE NEEDS OF VETERANS IN THE FUTURE;

19 (10) THE STATUS OF FEDERAL VETERAN PROGRAMS ON MARYLAND
 20 VETERANS; AND

21 (11) ANY OTHER ISSUE CONCERNING VETERANS THAT THE SECRETARY
 22 DETERMINES IS APPROPRIATE.

23 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

24 (a) There is a Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans.

25 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

26 (1) ~~four members~~ one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by
 27 the President of the Senate;

28 (2) ~~four members~~ one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by
 29 the Speaker of the House;

30 (3) the Secretary of the Veterans Administration, or the Secretary's
 31 designee;

32 (4) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary's
 33 designee; ~~and~~

1 (5) the Adjutant General of the Military Department, or the Adjutant
 2 General's designee; and

3 (5) (6) the following ~~five~~ six members, jointly appointed by the
 4 President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House:

5 (i) one member of the Maryland Congressional delegation, or the
 6 member's designee;

7 (†) (ii) ~~two members~~ one member of the Maryland Veterans
 8 Commission;

9 (†) (iii) two veterans, one of whom is disabled and one of whom
 10 has separated from military service within the past 2 years; ~~and~~

11 (iv) one individual who is the surviving spouse or parent of a
 12 veteran;

13 (†) (v) one ~~representative of a veteran's hospital~~ individual with
 14 knowledge of providing health care services to veterans; and

15 (vi) a representative of the Maryland Higher Education
 16 Commission.

17 (c) The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall jointly
 18 designate the chairman of the Task Force.

19 (d) The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall make all
 20 appointments on or before July 1, 2005.

21 (e) The members of the Task Force shall represent geographic, ethnic, and
 22 cultural differences throughout the State.

23 (f) The Task Force may request assistance and information from any
 24 government unit or other expert that the Task Force considers appropriate.

25 (†) (g) The Department of ~~Veterans Affairs~~ Legislative Services shall
 26 provide staff for the Task Force.

27 (†) (h) A member of the Task Force:

28 (1) may not receive compensation; but

29 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State
 30 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

31 (†) (i) The Task Force shall study and make recommendations ~~regarding on~~
 32 veteran issues including:

33 (1) the efficacy of the ~~Veterans Advocate Office~~ services and benefits for
 34 veterans to determine how well the ~~Veterans Advocate Office~~ helps services and

1 benefits help eligible individuals obtain benefits and whether these are being
2 obtained in a timely manner;

3 (2) whether there are enough advocate offices to efficiently help all
4 eligible individuals receive assistance;

5 (3) the potential impact of the increased number of veterans returning
6 from military service in recent conflicts on services provided by the State;

7 (4) what services are provided to veterans, veterans' families and
8 survivors and what services need to be provided including medical care, hospice care,
9 and mental health services; ~~and~~

10 (5) the feasibility of establishing homes for veterans in the Crownsville
11 hospital center and other regions of the State;

12 (6) the feasibility of establishing regional outreach and advocacy centers
13 around the State and using existing service centers as outreach and advocacy centers;

14 (7) the identification of State and federal benefits and services and how
15 to make them more comprehensive;

16 (8) how to improve outreach to women who are eligible to receive veteran
17 related benefits; and

18 ~~(5)~~ (9) any issue regarding benefits and assistance to veterans that the
19 Task Force determines is necessary.

20 (h) The Task Force shall submit an interim report to the Governor and the
21 General Assembly, on or before December 1, 2005, and report its final findings and
22 recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State
23 Government Article, the General Assembly, on or before December 1, 2005 2006.

24 ~~SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section 1 of this Act~~
25 ~~shall take effect July 1, 2005. Section 1 of this Act shall remain effective for a period~~
26 ~~of 5 years and, at the end of June 30, 2010, with no further action required by the~~
27 ~~General Assembly, Section 1 of this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and~~
28 ~~effect.~~

29 ~~SECTION 5. 4.~~ AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section 3 of this Act
30 shall take effect June 1, 2005. Section 3 of this Act shall remain effective for a period
31 of 6 months and 1 day and, at the end of December 1, 2005, with no further action
32 required by the General Assembly, Section 3 of this Act shall be abrogated and of no
33 further force and effect.

34 ~~SECTION 6. 5.~~ AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, except as provided
35 in ~~Sections 4 and 5~~ Section 4 of this Act, this Act shall take effect June 1, 2005.

