

(PRE-FILED)

By: The Speaker and Delegates Brown, Hixson, and ~~Hammen~~ Hammen, Aumann, Barkley, Bartlett, Barve, Benson, Bobo, Boteler, Bozman, Branch, Bromwell, Bronrott, Burns, Cadden, Cane, Cardin, G. Clagett, V. Clagett, Conroy, Conway, D. Davis, Donoghue, Doory, Dumais, Edwards, Elliott, Elmore, Feldman, Frank, Gaines, Glassman, Goodwin, Gordon, Griffith, Gutierrez, Harrison, Haynes, Healey, Heller, Holmes, Howard, Hubbard, James, Jameson, Jennings, Jones, Kaiser, Kelley, King, Krebs, Krysiak, Kullen, Lawton, Lee, Leopold, Levy, Love, Madaleno, Malone, Mandel, Mayer, McComas, McConkey, McHale, McIntosh, McKee, McMillan, Menes, Moe, Montgomery, Morhaim, Murray, Nathan-Pulliam, Niemann, O'Donnell, Paige, Parker, Patterson, Pendergrass, Petzold, Proctor, Pugh, Quinter, Rosenberg, Shank, Smigiel, Sophocleus, Sossi, Stern, Trueschler, F. Turner, V. Turner, Vallario, Vaughn, Zirkin, Boschert, Cryor, C. Davis, Gilleland, Marriott, Myers, Ramirez, Ross, Goldwater, Costa, Kach, Kohl, McDonough, Oaks, Rudolph, and Weldon

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Assigned to: Ways and Means and Health and Government Operations

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments
House action: Adopted
Read second time: March 14, 2006

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Veterans Advocacy and Education Act of 2006**

3 FOR the purpose of altering the eligibility requirements for the Edward T. Conroy
4 Memorial Scholarship Program to include certain children of certain members of
5 the armed forces; altering certain disability criteria under the Program; making
6 stylistic changes; defining a certain term; establishing the Veterans of the
7 Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship; establishing application
8 requirements for participation in the scholarship; requiring a certain
9 scholarship to supplement certain federal education benefits; providing that
10 each scholarship may be used for certain educational expenses; prohibiting the
11 annual amount of a scholarship from exceeding a certain percentage of the
12 equivalent tuition and certain fees of certain institutions of higher education;

1 requiring a scholarship recipient to maintain a certain grade point average;
2 providing for the duration of the scholarship; requiring funds for the scholarship
3 to be provided in the annual budget of the Maryland Higher Education
4 Commission; requiring that certain funds provided for scholarships be used in
5 subsequent fiscal years under certain circumstances; requiring scholarship
6 recipients to file for certain federal and State financial aid by a certain date;
7 prohibiting certain scholarships from being awarded after a certain date;
8 permitting certain scholarships to be renewed after a certain date; authorizing
9 legislative scholarship funds to be used for certain purposes; establishing a
10 Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship Fund in the
11 Commission; directing the Commission to use certain gifts and grants for the
12 Fund in a certain manner; requiring the Commission to prepare a certain
13 annual report regarding the Fund; requiring that the Commission transfer
14 certain unspent Senatorial and Delegate scholarship funds to fund Veterans of
15 the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarships; establishing a certain
16 Outreach and Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans Affairs;
17 requiring the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to appoint a certain director of the
18 Program; providing a salary for and the duties of the director; requiring the
19 Program to help veterans and their dependents become aware of and access
20 certain benefits to which they are entitled under federal, State, and local law;
21 requiring the director to develop and implement a certain veterans outreach
22 plan; authorizing the director to enter into certain contracts and work with
23 certain governmental units and with certain organizations to provide certain
24 information about certain services for veterans; requiring the director to develop
25 certain mechanisms for outreach; requiring the Department to develop and
26 maintain a certain database; requiring the Department, in conjunction with
27 certain organizations to develop a certain survey; requiring the Outreach and
28 Advocacy Program to seek out and track certain veterans and provide certain
29 veterans with certain information; requiring the Secretary to submit a report on
30 or before a certain date of each year to the Governor and the General Assembly;
31 providing a certain death benefit to the surviving spouse, child, dependent
32 parent, or estate of certain individuals serving in the Afghanistan or Iraq
33 conflict under certain circumstances; establishing a Task Force to Study State
34 Assistance to Veterans; providing for the composition of the Task Force;
35 providing for the appointment of the chairman of the Task Force; providing for
36 the staffing of the Task Force; prohibiting members of the Task Force from
37 receiving compensation but entitling members to reimbursement of certain
38 expenses; requiring the Task Force to study certain issues and make certain
39 recommendations; requiring the Task Force to submit certain reports to the
40 Governor and the General Assembly on or before certain dates; providing for the
41 application of a certain provision of this Act; providing for the termination of a
42 certain provision of this Act; and generally relating to education, benefits, and
43 benefits assistance for veterans and veterans' families.

44 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

45 Article - Education

46 Section 18-407, 18-501, and 18-601(a) and (d)

47 Annotated Code of Maryland

1 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

2 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
3 Article - Education
4 Section 18-601(c)
5 Annotated Code of Maryland
6 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

7 ~~BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,~~
8 ~~Article - Education~~
9 ~~Section 18-601(d)~~
10 ~~Annotated Code of Maryland~~
11 ~~(2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)~~

12 BY adding to
13 Article - Education
14 Section 18-604
15 Annotated Code of Maryland
16 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

17 BY adding to
18 Article - State Government
19 Section 9-940 through 9-943 to be under the new part "Part V. Outreach and
20 Advocacy Program"; and 9-946 to be under the new part "Part VI.
21 Reporting"
22 Annotated Code of Maryland
23 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

24 BY adding to
25 Article - Public Safety
26 Section 1-202(a-1)
27 Annotated Code of Maryland
28 (2003 Volume and 2005 Supplement)

29 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
30 Article - Public Safety
31 Section 1-202(b)
32 Annotated Code of Maryland
33 (2003 Volume and 2005 Supplement)

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

Article - Education

1
2 18-407.

3 (a) Each Senator shall award all of his senatorial scholarships on or before
4 September 1 of each year.

5 (b) If any Senator fails to award all of his scholarships on or before September
6 1 of each year, the Commission shall make the remaining awards to applicants from
7 the Senator's legislative district who:

8 (1) Scored highest on the competitive examination; or

9 (2) Are attending an eligible institution and have completed at least 1
10 year in good academic standing.

11 (c) The Office shall:

12 (1) Notify each Senator of the applicants to whom it awards the
13 Senator's scholarships; and

14 (2) Announce publicly the names of all recipients.

15 (d) To the extent a scholarship awarded under § 18-404 of this subtitle is not
16 used by a student, moneys appropriated to the Commission for that award not used
17 by the end of the fiscal year shall be retained by the Commission for use by the
18 awarding Senator in the Senatorial Scholarship Program during subsequent fiscal
19 years.

20 (E) FOR THE TERM OF OFFICE ENDING IN JANUARY 2007 ONLY, THE
21 COMMISSION SHALL TRANSFER ANY UNSPENT SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS REMAINING AT
22 THE END OF A SENATOR'S TERM TO FUND THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND
23 IRAQ CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ESTABLISHED UNDER § 18-604 OF THIS
24 TITLE.

25 18-501.

26 (a) There is a program of Delegate Scholarships in this State that are awarded
27 under this subtitle.

28 (b) A scholarship awarded under this subtitle may be used at:

29 (1) An eligible institution for a program of undergraduate, graduate, or
30 professional studies;

31 (2) An accredited undergraduate, graduate, or professional institution
32 outside the State, if:

33 (i) The applicant will be studying in an academic area that is not
34 available in this State; or

- 1 2. Ambulance company or squad; or
- 2 3. Rescue company or squad;
- 3 (ii) A law enforcement officer;
- 4 (iii) A correctional officer; or
- 5 (iv) A member of the Maryland National Guard who was a resident
6 of this State at the time of death.

7 ~~[(5)]~~ (6) "Victim of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks" means a
8 Maryland resident who was killed as a result of the attacks on the World Trade
9 Center in New York City, the attack on the Pentagon in Virginia, or the crash of
10 United Airlines Flight 93 in Pennsylvania.

11 (c) The Program is the Edward T. Conroy Memorial Scholarship Program.

12 (d) A person may apply to the Office for a scholarship under this section if the
13 person:

14 (1) Except as provided in subsection (e) of this section, is a resident of
15 Maryland;

16 (2) (i) Is accepted for admission or enrolled in the regular
17 undergraduate, graduate or professional program at an eligible institution; or

18 (ii) Is enrolled in a 2-year terminal certificate program in which
19 the course work is acceptable for transfer credit for an accredited baccalaureate
20 program in an eligible institution; and

21 (3) (i) Is at least 16 years old and a son or daughter of a member of the
22 armed forces who [was a resident of this State at the time the parent]:

23 1. Died [or was totally and permanently disabled] as a
24 result of military service after December 7, 1941; [or]

25 2. SUFFERED A SERVICE CONNECTED 100% PERMANENT
26 DISABILITY AFTER DECEMBER 7, 1941; OR

27 [2.] 3. Was declared to be a prisoner of war or missing in
28 action, if that occurred on or after January 1, 1960 as a result of the Vietnam conflict,
29 and if the child was born prior to or while the parent was a prisoner of war or missing
30 in action;

31 (ii) Was a prisoner of war on or after January 1, 1960 as a result of
32 the Vietnam conflict and was a resident of this State at the time the person was
33 declared to be a prisoner of war or missing in action;

34 (iii) 1. Is at least 16 years old and a son or daughter of any State
35 or local public safety employee killed in the line of duty; or

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

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

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

8 1. A VETERAN OR ACTIVE DUTY MEMBER OF THE ARMED
9 FORCES WHO IS SERVING OR HAS SERVED IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT;
10 OR

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

14 (D) A SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL SUPPLEMENT
15 ANY FEDERAL EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR WHICH A RECIPIENT QUALIFIES AS A
16 RESULT OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S MILITARY SERVICE OR STATUS AS A DEPENDENT OF A
17 MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES OR OF A VETERAN OF THE ARMED FORCES.

18 (E) (1) EACH SCHOLARSHIP MAY BE USED, AT ANY ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION,
19 TO PAY FOR EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES AS DEFINED BY THE OFFICE, INCLUDING:

20 (I) TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES; AND

21 (II) ROOM AND BOARD.

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

29 (F) A SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT SHALL MAINTAIN A GRADE POINT AVERAGE
30 OF AT LEAST 2.5 ON A 4.0 SCALE.

31 (G) EACH RECIPIENT OF A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THIS SECTION MAY HOLD
32 THE AWARD FOR 5 YEARS OF FULL-TIME STUDY OR 8 YEARS OF PART-TIME STUDY.

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

35 (I) (1) THE OFFICE MAY NOT AWARD AN INITIAL SCHOLARSHIP TO AN
36 INDIVIDUAL SPECIFIED IN SUBSECTION ~~(C)(4)~~ (C)(3) OF THIS SECTION AFTER JUNE 30,
37 2012.

1 (2) THE OFFICE MAY RENEW A SCHOLARSHIP AFTER JUNE 30, 2012, IF
2 THE INDIVIDUAL RECEIVED AN INITIAL SCHOLARSHIP BEFORE THAT DATE.

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

6 (K) (1) FUNDS FOR THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ
7 CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP SHALL:

8 (I) BE AS PROVIDED IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET OF THE
9 COMMISSION BY THE GOVERNOR; AND

10 (II) INCLUDE FUNDS PROVIDED UNDER §§ 18-407(E) AND 18-501(D)
11 OF THIS TITLE.

12 (2) MONEY APPROPRIATED FOR SCHOLARSHIPS UNDER THIS SECTION
13 OR TRANSFERRED BY THE COMMISSION UNDER §§ 18-407(E) AND 18-501(D) OF THIS
14 TITLE THAT IS NOT USED BY THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR:

15 (I) MAY NOT REVERT TO THE STATE TREASURY; AND

16 (II) SHALL BE USED TO AWARD SCHOLARSHIPS UNDER THIS
17 SECTION DURING SUBSEQUENT FISCAL YEARS.

18 ~~(2)~~ (L) (1) (I) THERE IS A VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND
19 IRAQ CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN THE COMMISSION.

20 (II) THE COMMISSION:

21 1. MAY ACCEPT ANY GIFT OR GRANT FROM ANY PERSON OR
22 CORPORATION FOR THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ CONFLICTS
23 SCHOLARSHIP FUND;

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

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

30 ~~(2)~~ (2) (I) AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR, THE COMMISSION
31 SHALL PREPARE AN ANNUAL REPORT ON THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND
32 IRAQ CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP FUND THAT INCLUDES AN ACCOUNTING OF ALL
33 FINANCIAL RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES TO AND FROM THE FUND.

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

1

Article - State Government

2 9-938. RESERVED.

3 9-939. RESERVED.

4

PART V. OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM.

5 9-940.

6 (A) IN THIS PART, "PROGRAM" MEANS THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY
7 PROGRAM.

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

9 (C) 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 RELATING 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 9-941.

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 PROGRAM.

21 9-942.

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

25 (1) TAX BENEFITS;

26 (2) HEALTH CARE BENEFITS;

27 (3) DISABILITY BENEFITS;

28 (4) PENSION BENEFITS; AND

29 (5) EDUCATION.

30 (B) THE DIRECTOR OF THE 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 9-943.

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 PLAN.

11 (2) IN ORDER 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 (3) THE DIRECTOR SHALL WORK IN COLLABORATION WITH THE
20 MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION TO ACTIVELY HELP VETERANS AND
21 THEIR DEPENDENTS BECOME AWARE OF AND ACCESS EDUCATION AND TRAINING
22 BENEFITS.

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

28 (2) THE MECHANISMS FOR OUTREACH SHALL INCLUDE:

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

31 (II) A REGULAR NEWSLETTER;

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

34 (IV) OTHER MEASURES THE DIRECTOR CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE.

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

1 (D) THE DEPARTMENT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE TYPES OF
2 COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS LISTED IN SUBSECTION (A)(2) OF THIS
3 SECTION, SHALL DEVELOP A SURVEY TO ASSIST IN IDENTIFYING VETERANS AND
4 DEPENDENTS WHO MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR PENSION PROGRAMS.

5 (E) THE PROGRAM SHALL:

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

9 (2) PROVIDE WOUNDED OR DISABLED VETERANS WITH INFORMATION
10 ON AVAILABLE SERVICES AND BENEFITS AND SUPPORT IN OBTAINING THESE
11 SERVICES AND BENEFITS.

12 9-944. RESERVED.

13 9-945. RESERVED.

14 PART VI. REPORTING.

15 9-946.

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

19 (1) THE NUMBER OF:

20 (I) REQUESTS FOR HELP IN OBTAINING BENEFITS; AND

21 (II) VETERANS, VETERANS' DEPENDENTS, AND VETERANS'
22 SURVIVORS HELPED BY THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM BY CATEGORY;

23 (2) THE BENEFITS OBTAINED THROUGH THE OUTREACH AND
24 ADVOCACY PROGRAM 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 (5) A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE OUTREACH PLAN IN THE
31 OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM;

32 (6) AN ACCOUNT OF THE COSTS OF OPERATING THE OUTREACH AND
33 ADVOCACY PROGRAM;

1 (7) A STATUS OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR, EFFICACY OF,
2 EFFICIENCY OF, AND LEVEL OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR EACH OF THE
3 FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:

4 (I) CEMETERY;

5 (II) MEMORIAL;

6 (III) SERVICE;

7 (IV) VETERANS HOMES; AND

8 (V) OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY;

9 (8) A GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF VETERANS IN THE
10 STATE;

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

13 (10) THE STATUS OF FEDERAL VETERANS PROGRAMS AS THEY RELATE
14 TO MARYLAND VETERANS; AND

15 (11) ANY OTHER ISSUES CONCERNING VETERANS THAT THE SECRETARY
16 CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE.

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

19 **Article - Public Safety**

20 1-202.

21 (A-1) FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION, AN INDIVIDUAL SERVED IN THE
22 AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT IF THE INDIVIDUAL WAS A MEMBER OF THE
23 UNIFORM SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES WHO SERVED IN:

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

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

30 (b) (1) Subject to subsection (c) of this section and paragraph (2) of this
31 subsection, a death benefit of \$50,000 shall be paid to the surviving spouse, child,
32 dependent parent, or estate of each of the following individuals who is killed or dies in
33 the performance of duties on or after July 1, 1989:

34 (i) a law enforcement officer;

- 1 (ii) a correctional officer;
- 2 (iii) a volunteer or career firefighter or rescue squad member; [or]
- 3 (iv) a sworn member of the office of State Fire Marshal; OR
- 4 (V) A MARYLAND RESIDENT WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE
- 5 UNIFORM SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES SERVING IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR
- 6 IRAQ CONFLICT.

7 (2) For fiscal year 1999, and for each following fiscal year, the death
8 benefit provided in the prior fiscal year shall be adjusted by any change in the
9 calendar year preceding the fiscal year in the Consumer Price Index (all urban
10 customers - United States city average - all items), as published by the United States
11 Bureau of Labor Statistics.

12 (3) A death benefit under this subsection is in addition to:

- 13 (i) any workers' compensation benefits;
- 14 (ii) the proceeds of any form of life insurance, regardless of who
- 15 paid the premiums on the insurance; and
- 16 (iii) the funeral benefit provided under subsection (d) of this section.

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

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

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

20 (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of
21 the Senate;

22 (2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of
23 the House;

24 (3) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or the Secretary's designee;

25 (4) the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, or the Secretary's
26 designee;

27 (5) the Adjutant General of the Military, or the Adjutant General's
28 designee; and

29 (6) the following seven members, jointly appointed by the President of
30 the Senate and the Speaker of the House:

31 (i) one member of the Maryland Congressional Delegation, or the
32 member's designee;

- 1 (ii) one member of the Maryland Veterans Commission;
- 2 (iii) two veterans, one of whom is disabled and one of whom has
3 separated from military service within the past 2 years;
- 4 (iv) one individual who is the surviving spouse or parent of a
5 veteran;
- 6 (v) one individual with knowledge of providing health care services
7 to veterans; and
- 8 (vi) a representative of the Maryland Higher Education
9 Commission.

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

12 (d) The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall make all
13 appointments on or before July 1, 2006.

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

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

18 (g) The Department of Legislative Services shall provide staff for the Task
19 Force.

20 (h) A member of the Task Force:

21 (1) may not receive compensation; but

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

24 (i) The Task Force shall study and make recommendations on veterans issues
25 including:

26 (1) the efficacy of the services and benefits for veterans to determine how
27 well the services and benefits help eligible individuals obtain benefits and whether
28 these are being obtained in a timely manner;

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

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

1 (4) what services are provided to veterans, veterans' families and
2 survivors and what services need to be provided including medical care, hospice care,
3 and mental health services;

4 (5) the feasibility of establishing homes for veterans in the Crownsville
5 Hospital Center and other regions of the State;

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

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

10 (8) how to improve outreach to women who are eligible to receive
11 veteran-related benefits; and

12 (9) any issue regarding benefits and assistance to veterans that the Task
13 Force determines is necessary.

14 (j) The Task Force shall submit an interim report to the Governor and the
15 General Assembly, on or before December 1, 2006, and report its final findings and
16 recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State
17 Government Article, the General Assembly, on or before December 1, 2007.

18 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section 2 of this Act shall
19 be construed to apply retroactively and shall be applied to a Maryland resident who
20 was a member of the uniform services of the United States serving in the Afghanistan
21 conflict on or after October 24, 2001, or the Iraq conflict on or after March 19, 2003.

22 SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
23 June 1, 2006. Section 3 of this Act shall remain effective for a period of 1 year, 6
24 months and 1 day and, at the end of December 1, 2007, with no further action
25 required by the General Assembly, Section 3 of this Act shall be abrogated and of no
26 further force and effect.