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By: **Senators Garagiola, Astle, Brinkley, Colburn, DeGrange, Dyson, Exum, Forehand, Frosh, Giannetti, Gladden, Green, Hafer, Haines, Harris, Hollinger, Hooper, Hughes, Jacobs, Jimeno, Kasemeyer, Kelley, Klausmeier, Kramer, Lawlah, Mooney, Munson, Ruben, Stone, and Teitelbaum**

Introduced and read first time: January 26, 2006  
Assigned to: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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A BILL ENTITLED

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; establishing the Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq  
7 Conflicts Scholarship; establishing application requirements for participation in  
8 the scholarship; requiring a certain scholarship to supplement certain federal  
9 education benefits; providing that each scholarship may be used for certain  
10 educational expenses; prohibiting the annual amount of a scholarship from  
11 exceeding a certain percentage of the equivalent tuition and certain fees of  
12 certain institutions of higher education; requiring a scholarship recipient to  
13 maintain a certain grade point average; providing for the duration of the  
14 scholarship; requiring funds for the scholarship to be provided in the annual  
15 budget of the Maryland Higher Education Commission; requiring scholarship  
16 recipients to file for certain federal and State financial aid by a certain date;  
17 prohibiting certain scholarships from being awarded after a certain date;  
18 permitting certain scholarships to be renewed after a certain date; authorizing  
19 legislative scholarship funds to be used for certain purposes; establishing a  
20 Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship Fund in the  
21 Commission; directing the Commission to use certain gifts and grants for the  
22 Fund in a certain manner; requiring the Commission to prepare a certain  
23 annual report regarding the Fund; establishing a certain Outreach and  
24 Advocacy Program in the Department of Veterans Affairs; requiring the  
25 Secretary of Veterans Affairs to appoint a certain director of the Program;  
26 providing a salary for and the duties of the director; requiring the Program to  
27 help veterans and their dependents become aware of and access certain benefits  
28 to which they are entitled under federal, State, and local law; requiring the  
29 director to develop and implement a certain veterans outreach plan; authorizing  
30 the director to enter into certain contracts and work with certain governmental  
31 units and with certain organizations to provide certain information about

1 certain services for veterans; requiring the director to develop certain  
2 mechanisms for outreach; requiring the Department to develop and maintain a  
3 certain database; requiring the Department, in conjunction with certain  
4 organizations to develop a certain survey; requiring the Outreach and Advocacy  
5 Program to seek out and track certain veterans and provide certain veterans  
6 with certain information; requiring the Secretary to submit a report on or before  
7 a certain date of each year to the Governor and the General Assembly; providing  
8 a certain death benefit to the surviving spouse, child, dependent parent, or  
9 estate of certain individuals serving in the Afghanistan or Iraq conflict under  
10 certain circumstances; establishing a Task Force to Study State Assistance to  
11 Veterans; providing for the composition of the Task Force; providing for the  
12 appointment of the chairman of the Task Force; providing for the staffing of the  
13 Task Force; prohibiting members of the Task Force from receiving compensation  
14 but entitling members to reimbursement of certain expenses; requiring the Task  
15 Force to study certain issues and make certain recommendations; requiring the  
16 Task Force to submit certain reports to the Governor and the General Assembly  
17 on or before certain dates; providing for the application of a certain provision of  
18 this Act; providing for the termination of a certain provision of this Act; and  
19 generally relating to education, benefits, and benefits assistance for veterans  
20 and veterans' families.

21 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
22 Article - Education  
23 Section 18-601(c)  
24 Annotated Code of Maryland  
25 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

26 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
27 Article - Education  
28 Section 18-601(d)  
29 Annotated Code of Maryland  
30 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

31 BY adding to  
32 Article - Education  
33 Section 18-604  
34 Annotated Code of Maryland  
35 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

36 BY adding to  
37 Article - State Government  
38 Section 9-940 through 9-943 to be under the new part "Part V. Outreach and  
39 Advocacy Program"; and 9-946 to be under the new part "Part VI.  
40 Reporting"  
41 Annotated Code of Maryland  
42 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

1 BY adding to  
2 Article - Public Safety  
3 Section 1-202(a-1)  
4 Annotated Code of Maryland  
5 (2003 Volume and 2005 Supplement)

6 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
7 Article - Public Safety  
8 Section 1-202(b)  
9 Annotated Code of Maryland  
10 (2003 Volume and 2005 Supplement)

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

13 **Article - Education**

14 18-601.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 [2.] 3. Was declared to be a prisoner of war or missing in  
32 action, if that occurred on or after January 1, 1960 as a result of the Vietnam conflict,  
33 and if the child was born prior to or while the parent was a prisoner of war or missing  
34 in action;

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

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

6 2. Is the surviving spouse of any State or local public safety  
7 employee killed in the line of duty;

8 (iv) Is a disabled public safety employee;

9 (v) Is a veteran, as defined under § 9-901 of the State Government  
10 Article, who:

11 1. Suffers a [service-related] SERVICE CONNECTED  
12 disability of 25% or greater; and

13 2. Has exhausted or is no longer eligible for federal veterans'  
14 educational benefits; or

15 (vi) Is at least 16 years old and a son or daughter of or the surviving  
16 spouse of a victim of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

17 18-604.

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

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

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

27 (B) THERE IS A VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ CONFLICTS  
28 SCHOLARSHIP.

29 (C) AN INDIVIDUAL MAY APPLY TO THE OFFICE FOR A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER  
30 THIS SECTION IF THE INDIVIDUAL:

31 (1) IS A RESIDENT OF MARYLAND;

32 (2) (I) IS ACCEPTED FOR ADMISSION OR ENROLLED IN THE REGULAR  
33 UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM AT AN ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION; OR

34 (II) IS ACCEPTED FOR ADMISSION OR ENROLLED IN A 2-YEAR  
35 TERMINAL CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN WHICH THE COURSE WORK IS ACCEPTABLE

1 FOR TRANSFER CREDIT FOR AN ACCREDITED BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM IN AN  
2 ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION; AND

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

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

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

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

12 1. A VETERAN OR ACTIVE DUTY MEMBER OF THE ARMED  
13 FORCES WHO IS SERVING OR HAS SERVED IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT;  
14 OR

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

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

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

24 (I) TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES; AND

25 (II) ROOM AND BOARD.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 (K) (1) FUNDS FOR THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ  
11 CONFLICTS SCHOLARSHIP SHALL BE AS PROVIDED IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET OF THE  
12 COMMISSION BY THE GOVERNOR.

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

15 (II) THE COMMISSION:

16 1. MAY ACCEPT ANY GIFT OR GRANT FROM ANY PERSON OR  
17 CORPORATION FOR THE VETERANS OF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ CONFLICTS  
18 SCHOLARSHIP FUND;

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

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

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

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

32 **Article - State Government**

33 9-938. RESERVED.

34 9-939. RESERVED.

## PART V. OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM.

1 9-940.

2 (A) IN THIS PART, "PROGRAM" MEANS THE OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY  
3 PROGRAM.

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

5 (C) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO ENSURE THAT:

6 (1) VETERANS ARE INFORMED OF THE SERVICES, BENEFITS, AND  
7 ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO THEM FROM THE STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT;  
8 AND

9 (2) GENERAL ISSUES RELATING TO VETERANS NEEDS ARE BROUGHT TO  
10 THE ATTENTION OF THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ORDER FOR  
11 THEM TO BE ADDRESSED.

12 9-941.

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

14 (B) THE DIRECTOR IS ENTITLED TO THE SALARY PROVIDED IN THE STATE  
15 BUDGET.

16 (C) THE DIRECTOR SHALL ADMINISTER AND COORDINATE THE PROGRAM.

17 9-942.

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

21 (1) TAX BENEFITS;

22 (2) HEALTH CARE BENEFITS;

23 (3) DISABILITY BENEFITS;

24 (4) PENSION BENEFITS; AND

25 (5) EDUCATION.

26 (B) THE DIRECTOR OF THE PROGRAM SHALL:

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

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

4 9-943.

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

9 (2) IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT THE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES  
10 UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE DIRECTOR MAY:

11 (I) ENTER INTO CONTRACTS; AND

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

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

22 (2) THE MECHANISMS FOR OUTREACH SHALL INCLUDE:

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

25 (II) A REGULAR NEWSLETTER;

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

28 (IV) OTHER MEASURES THE DIRECTOR CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE.

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

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

35 (E) THE PROGRAM SHALL:



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

4 (2) PROVIDE WOUNDED OR DISABLED VETERANS WITH INFORMATION  
5 ON AVAILABLE SERVICES AND BENEFITS AND SUPPORT IN OBTAINING THESE  
6 SERVICES AND BENEFITS.

7 9-944. RESERVED.

8 9-945. RESERVED.

9 PART VI. REPORTING.

10 9-946.

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

14 (1) THE NUMBER OF:

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

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

18 (2) THE BENEFITS OBTAINED THROUGH THE OUTREACH AND  
19 ADVOCACY PROGRAM BY CATEGORY;

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

22 (4) THE AVERAGE AMOUNT OF DISABILITY AND PENSION BENEFITS  
23 RECEIVED BY QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS IN THIS STATE COMPARED TO INDIVIDUALS  
24 IN OTHER STATES;

25 (5) A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE OUTREACH PLAN IN THE  
26 OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM;

27 (6) AN ACCOUNT OF THE COSTS OF OPERATING THE OUTREACH AND  
28 ADVOCACY PROGRAM;

29 (7) A STATUS OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR, EFFICACY OF,  
30 EFFICIENCY OF, AND LEVEL OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR EACH OF THE  
31 FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:

32 (I) CEMETERY;

33 (II) MEMORIAL;

- 1 (III) SERVICE;
- 2 (IV) VETERANS HOMES; AND
- 3 (V) OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY;
- 4 (8) A GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF VETERANS IN THE
- 5 STATE;

6 (9) THE ESTIMATED IMPACT CURRENT MILITARY OPERATIONS ARE

7 LIKELY TO HAVE ON THE NEEDS OF VETERANS IN THE FUTURE;

8 (10) THE STATUS OF FEDERAL VETERANS PROGRAMS AS THEY RELATE

9 TO MARYLAND VETERANS; AND

10 (11) ANY OTHER ISSUES CONCERNING VETERANS THAT THE SECRETARY

11 CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE.

12 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland

13 read as follows:

14 **Article - Public Safety**

15 1-202.

16 (A-1) FOR PURPOSES OF THIS SECTION, AN INDIVIDUAL SERVED IN THE

17 AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT IF THE INDIVIDUAL WAS A MEMBER OF THE

18 UNIFORM SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES WHO SERVED IN:

19 (1) AFGHANISTAN OR CONTIGUOUS AIR SPACE, AS DEFINED IN

20 FEDERAL REGULATIONS, ON OR AFTER OCTOBER 24, 2001, AND BEFORE A TERMINAL

21 DATE TO BE PRESCRIBED BY THE UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF DEFENSE; OR

22 (2) IRAQ OR CONTIGUOUS WATERS OR AIR SPACE, AS DEFINED IN

23 FEDERAL REGULATIONS, ON OR AFTER MARCH 19, 2003, AND BEFORE A TERMINAL

24 DATE TO BE PRESCRIBED BY THE UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.

25 (b) (1) Subject to subsection (c) of this section and paragraph (2) of this

26 subsection, a death benefit of \$50,000 shall be paid to the surviving spouse, child,

27 dependent parent, or estate of each of the following individuals who is killed or dies in

28 the performance of duties on or after July 1, 1989:

- 29 (i) a law enforcement officer;
- 30 (ii) a correctional officer;
- 31 (iii) a volunteer or career firefighter or rescue squad member; [or]
- 32 (iv) a sworn member of the office of State Fire Marshal; OR

1 (V) A MARYLAND RESIDENT WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE  
2 UNIFORM SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES SERVING IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR  
3 IRAQ CONFLICT.

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

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

10 (i) any workers' compensation benefits;

11 (ii) the proceeds of any form of life insurance, regardless of who  
12 paid the premiums on the insurance; and

13 (iii) the funeral benefit provided under subsection (d) of this section.

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

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

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

17 (1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of  
18 the Senate;

19 (2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of  
20 the House;

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

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

24 (5) the Adjutant General of the Military, or the Adjutant General's  
25 designee; and

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

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

30 (ii) one member of the Maryland Veterans Commission;

31 (iii) two veterans, one of whom is disabled and one of whom has  
32 separated from military service within the past 2 years;

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

3 (v) one individual with knowledge of providing health care services  
4 to veterans; and

5 (vi) a representative of the Maryland Higher Education  
6 Commission.

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

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

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

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

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

17 (h) A member of the Task Force:

18 (1) may not receive compensation; but

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

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

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

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

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

30 (4) what services are provided to veterans, veterans' families and  
31 survivors and what services need to be provided including medical care, hospice care,  
32 and mental health services;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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