
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**

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Committee Report: Favorable
Senate action: Adopted
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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; 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

1 Secretary of Veterans Affairs to appoint a certain director of the Program;
2 providing a salary for and the duties of the director; requiring the Program to
3 help veterans and their dependents become aware of and access certain benefits
4 to which they are entitled under federal, State, and local law; requiring the
5 director to develop and implement a certain veterans outreach plan; authorizing
6 the director to enter into certain contracts and work with certain governmental
7 units and with certain organizations to provide certain information about
8 certain services for veterans; requiring the director to develop certain
9 mechanisms for outreach; requiring the Department to develop and maintain a
10 certain database; requiring the Department, in conjunction with certain
11 organizations to develop a certain survey; requiring the Outreach and Advocacy
12 Program to seek out and track certain veterans and provide certain veterans
13 with certain information; requiring the Secretary to submit a report on or before
14 a certain date of each year to the Governor and the General Assembly; providing
15 a certain death benefit to the surviving spouse, child, dependent parent, or
16 estate of certain individuals serving in the Afghanistan or Iraq conflict under
17 certain circumstances; establishing a Task Force to Study State Assistance to
18 Veterans; providing for the composition of the Task Force; providing for the
19 appointment of the chairman of the Task Force; providing for the staffing of the
20 Task Force; prohibiting members of the Task Force from receiving compensation
21 but entitling members to reimbursement of certain expenses; requiring the Task
22 Force to study certain issues and make certain recommendations; requiring the
23 Task Force to submit certain reports to the Governor and the General Assembly
24 on or before certain dates; providing for the application of a certain provision of
25 this Act; providing for the termination of a certain provision of this Act; and
26 generally relating to education, benefits, and benefits assistance for veterans
27 and veterans' families.

28 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
29 Article - Education
30 Section 18-601(c)
31 Annotated Code of Maryland
32 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

33 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
34 Article - Education
35 Section 18-601(d)
36 Annotated Code of Maryland
37 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

38 BY adding to
39 Article - Education
40 Section 18-604
41 Annotated Code of Maryland
42 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

1 BY adding to
2 Article - State Government
3 Section 9-940 through 9-943 to be under the new part "Part V. Outreach and
4 Advocacy Program"; and 9-946 to be under the new part "Part VI.
5 Reporting"
6 Annotated Code of Maryland
7 (2004 Replacement Volume and 2005 Supplement)

8 BY adding to
9 Article - Public Safety
10 Section 1-202(a-1)
11 Annotated Code of Maryland
12 (2003 Volume and 2005 Supplement)

13 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
14 Article - Public Safety
15 Section 1-202(b)
16 Annotated Code of Maryland
17 (2003 Volume and 2005 Supplement)

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

20 **Article - Education**

21 18-601.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 (1) IS A RESIDENT OF MARYLAND;

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

4 (II) IS ACCEPTED FOR ADMISSION OR ENROLLED IN A 2-YEAR
5 TERMINAL CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN WHICH THE COURSE WORK IS ACCEPTABLE
6 FOR TRANSFER CREDIT FOR AN ACCREDITED BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM IN AN
7 ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION; AND

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

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

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

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

17 1. A VETERAN OR ACTIVE DUTY MEMBER OF THE ARMED
18 FORCES WHO IS SERVING OR HAS SERVED IN THE AFGHANISTAN OR IRAQ CONFLICT;
19 OR

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

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

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

29 (I) TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES; AND

30 (II) ROOM AND BOARD.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 (II) THE COMMISSION:

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

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

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

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

33 (II) THE COMMISSION SHALL SUBMIT A COPY OF THE REPORT TO
34 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AS PROVIDED UNDER § 2-1246 OF THE STATE
35 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 (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 STATE AGENCY OR UNIT THE DIRECTOR CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE.

24 (2) THE MECHANISMS FOR OUTREACH SHALL INCLUDE:

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

27 (II) A REGULAR NEWSLETTER;

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

30 (IV) OTHER MEASURES THE DIRECTOR CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE.

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

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

1 (E) THE PROGRAM SHALL:

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

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

8 9-944. RESERVED.

9 9-945. RESERVED.

10 PART VI. REPORTING.

11 9-946.

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

15 (1) THE NUMBER OF:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 (I) CEMETERY;

1 (II) MEMORIAL;

2 (III) SERVICE;

3 (IV) VETERANS HOMES; AND

4 (V) OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY;

5 (8) A GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF VETERANS IN THE
6 STATE;

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

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

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

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

15 **Article - Public Safety**

16 1-202.

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

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

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

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

30 (i) a law enforcement officer;

31 (ii) a correctional officer;

32 (iii) a volunteer or career firefighter or rescue squad member; [or]

33 (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.